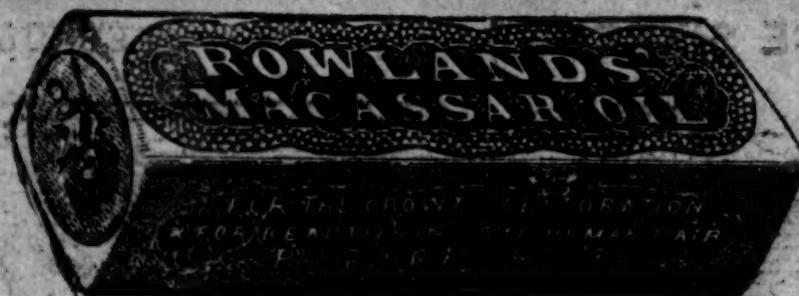


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THE
SIXPENNY MAGAZINE

FEBRUARY 1, 1863.

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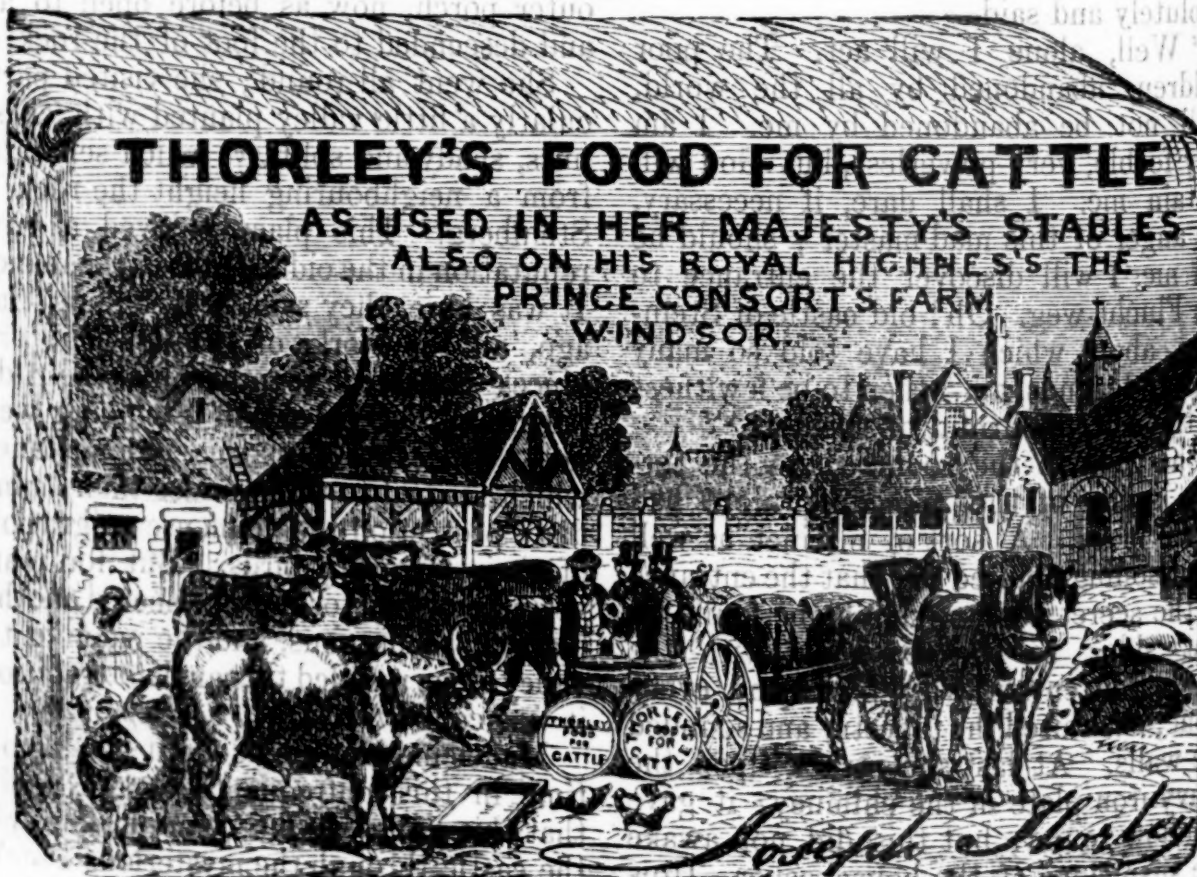
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THE STORK'S NEST.

CHAPTER XXXII.

FRITZ KEEPS THE SECRET.

MADAM REUTNER was sadly discouraged when she saw those persons whom she hoped would assist her leaving the castle. She followed them even to the outer gate, entreating them to renew their search, but they only laughed at her. The good woman retired, cast down, to that modest chamber which she occupied close to her son's.

"They leave me alone here," she murmured; "still I am sure that this brave young man, this Sigismund Muller, would demolish with his nails this old tower, if he partook of the suspicions which torture me. Oh, what cruel chance brought that fatal letter here to turn him from his first project? He loves his friend as I love Wilhelmina, and if he could think—What is to be done? My God! what can I do? My lord has realized his terrible vengeance; I have now no doubt of it. They are here, shut in, buried alive, already suffering the anguish of famine! Oh, if I could hear their cries, their groans."

She listened, holding in her breath; no sound reached her; the rock was too thick to allow the moans of the dying to be heard. The old Reutner at last rose up resolutely and said—

"Well, alone I will act. The poor children, abandoned by all the world, shall not be abandoned by me. I am very feeble, very powerless, but God will sustain me. I shall dare, if necessary, the anger of this mad master; should he kill me, I will discover the entrance to the Flucht-weg. Oh! old castle of Steinberg, about which I have told so many gloomy legends, am I then to be a witness of the most mournful of them all?"

She went to the room where the terrible scene of the preceding night had taken place. A sort of instinct as well as reasoning pointed out that the entrance of the secret passage should be found on that side; so she examined with the greatest attention every board and every stone; she raised the tapestry and sounded the walls. At last she struck upon the heavy iron plate in the chimney; it gave a hollow sound; but this did not awake the suspicions of the housekeeper. How could she suppose that this massive grate could turn on a pivot, carefully disguised

as it was by masonry? The room was lighted only by a single window; the insufficiency of the light prevented her from seeing the chinks, otherwise easily perceptible, and of a nature to betray the existence of a cavity.

So Madeleine, after two hours' investigation, remained convinced that the Flucht-weg had no issue from this chamber.

The old woman was overcome with fatigue; still she did not give up. She traversed the whole of the chateau, the staircase of the tower, the gallery in ruins, scrutinizing carefully every spot which her exact knowledge of the localities permitted the supposition of double walls. She excepted only from this rigorous search the vaulted apartment, which Sigismund had already done. But her efforts were in vain, and Madeleine was about giving up in despair.

An idea came to her all at once. The Flucht-weg, according to tradition, had two issues—one into the interior of the castle, the other into the country. If the first escaped her search, the other, perhaps, might be less difficult to discover.

When this idea came to her mind, Madeleine recommenced her labours. She crossed the garden, walked out of the outer porch, now as before open to all, and descended to the foot of the rock.

She went all round; she visited particularly a little valley planted with chestnuts, shady and solitary, which separated from a neighbouring height the rock of Steinberg. This place enjoyed a great reputation in the old legends of the manor. It was here, they said, that, a long time ago, all the storks of the adjacent provinces collected together for their departure. The barons of Steinberg were not a little proud of this circumstance, which seemed to place under their immediate protection the immense migrations of their favourite birds. But for many years back the storks had selected another place of rendezvous, and the name of the valley alone recalled this ancient tradition; it was called *the Valley of Departure*.

Madeleine Reutner sought for a long time in this unfrequented spot, hoping that this valley might communicate with the castle through the mysterious Flucht-weg. Vainly did she seek, in the thickets, amongst brambles, for the cave or

grotto; she perceived nothing to justify any hope.

She then directed her steps to the other side of Steinberg, on the bank of the river. After wandering about for a minute or two, she remarked under a rock undermined by the water an excavation deep enough; she stopped. But in her reflections the Flucht-weg ought to have a larger entrance, and this place was too near the castle. Besides, this grotto would be often visited by the boatmen and children of the village; it could not have concealed for so many years the entrance of this mysterious passage.

Spite of these reflections, Madeleine looked at the hollow of the rock; the least indication would have put her in the way of discovery.

Frantz's fatal precaution had lost all.

The old woman seeing some slimy stones, which appeared to have been brought there by an overflow of the Rhine, never thought that she was near the place, and passed on slowly.

The best part of the day had now passed away; Madeleine had taken no food, and her strength began to leave her. She with difficulty ascended the pathway to the castle, dragging herself along, and stopping at every step. But she did not care for her own sufferings; large tears rolled down her wrinkled cheeks, and she murmured—

"Poor children!—poor children!"

As she crossed the garden, she heard a sonorous voice resounding amongst the ruins with a joyful song.

This gaiety wrung the heart of the old woman; but this sorrow soon gave way to anger, when she recognised in the singer her own son, Fritz Reutner. He was peaceably weeding a bed of vegetables.

Madeleine went towards him with a tottering but rapid step.

"Fritz," said she, reproachfully, "how dare you insult our grief by this cruel joy? Wretch! this day is a fatal day for the masters of Steinberg; it will be the last, perhaps, of this ancient and illustrious family."

Fritz stopped working, and raised himself slowly.

"Ah! is it you, mother?" said he, with his accustomed phlegm. "What do you want? My conscience is not troubled; they order me, I obey. Why should I bother myself about the rest? Am I my lord's judge? So much the worse for him if he does wrong! I have nothing to reproach myself with, and I sing to

keep myself from thinking. Well, if Steinberg perishes, at least they cannot say that Fritz Reutner has disobeyed or was wanting in his duty. I ask no more than that."

Fritz rarely made a speech so long as this; in spite of his reiterated assurances that his conscience was not troubled, he seemed to be a prey to some grave pre-occupation, to some remorse, perhaps. Madeleine guessed it.

"Is it then true, Fritz," said she, in a harrowing tone, "that you know all? that you are an accomplice of this awful crime?"

"Peace, mother, peace," replied the gardener, in a hard tone; "ask me nothing. I have obeyed my lord! that is enough for both you and me."

"But, obstinate fellow, have I not told you for the hundredth time that the baron is mad, raving mad?"

"Well, if he is, we have no business to speak of it. We are his servants, we have eaten his bread. Besides, has there not been enough to make him mad? First, the loss of his barony, then the history of his sister——"

"Will you excuse his horrible anger against yourself? Have you forgotten the scene of yesterday with the wounded stork?"

"On my word, mother, I have forgotten all about it. Well, if my master killed me, had he not the right to do it? Vincelas, the grandfather of the baron, killed one of his men who by accident wounded a favourite dog. You have told me so a hundred times, and also that the spirit of the hunter, every time his master went to the chase, sounded a trumpet to raise the game. Certainly, if you had not assisted me yesterday, my spirit would have returned here in some shape or another. However, all things considered, it was a great service you rendered me, and I thank you for it from the bottom of my heart."

Madeleine seemed grievously surprised at this gross credulity which she had herself nourished, of this blind devotion which she was the first to teach her son. She understood, too late, how much her own love of these old legends, her respect for a decayed family, had warped the mind of Fritz, naturally so obtuse.

"On my knees I ask for mercy for this poor Wilhelmina. I have brought her up; she is like my child—your sister, Fritz. Yes, she is your sister; she never had any but kind words for

you. Besides, she was also your mistress; she was the Baroness de Steinberg. You owe her obedience. She dies, Fritz—do you hear? She is dying, and her death will be your work.”

“Should I be really guilty?” he murmured, as if to himself. “However, the servant who assisted Baron Emmanuel to accomplish his revenge against Bertha and Stoffensels was never blamed for obeying his master. You yourself mother,” he added, “have many times boasted of the fidelity of this man; how could you propose to me to act differently from him?”

Madeleine dropped her head. God had punished her for having misled her son’s mind by so many strange stories, so many fabulous legends.

“Come,” said she, greatly discouraged, “I shall obtain nothing from him. He is incapable of distinguishing truth from falsehood.”

Then turning towards Fritz—

“Where is my lord?”

“In the vaulted chamber, I imagine; he speaks to himself and weeps.”

“He weeps, do you say? Oh! without doubt his heart is softening; his reason begins to revive. To-day, at the moment Steinberg was restored to him, he appeared to understand that happy event. If it should turn out that this madness was only the result of the delirium of the fever? I shall see him, supplicate him.”

The good woman re-entered the tower, when she saw her son leaving his work, and going to the stable where the major’s horse stood.

“Where are you going to, Fritz?”

“The night is coming on, mother, and my lord ordered me to leave at sunset. I am going to Heidelberg for some important despatches, sent to the major’s address by the colonel of his regiment; I shall not be back before to-morrow evening.”

“Go, my son, and may God protect you; never had master a servant more faithful, more devoted than you.”

She mounted the staircase of the tower, whilst Fritz continued his preparations for departure.

Madeleine reached the vaulted chamber, but the baron was not there. As the door was open, he could not be far away. The old woman, thinking he might be upon the platform, went there to seek him.

The baron was indeed there, standing with his elbows on the parapet; he was looking attentively at some object placed

a little below him, outside the tower. His attention was so riveted, that he was not aware of the presence of Madeleine.

After some minutes she went towards him, but soon stopped, and glancing around her, she quickly perceived what so captivated the attention of the maniac.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

BURIED ALIVE.

It is now time for us to descend into this terrible *Flucht-weg*, where Frantz and Wilhelmina were exposed to all the horrors of despair and famine.

Wilhelmina had been placed upon one of those worm-eaten benches which still adorned the ancient treasury of the barons de Steinberg. She had fainted, and at first had no consciousness of the fate which awaited her.

Frantz, on the contrary, having retained his presence of mind, felt all the horror of their situation. They had brutally thrown him on the wet soil of the dungeon, with his hands and feet tied together, and every attempt he made to escape or resume his struggle with the madman was useless.

Nevertheless, as long as the major and Fritz could hear him, he entreated them to exercise their hatred upon him alone, to spare Wilhelmina. He used the most touching expressions in imploring them to save the poor young baroness; but what could he expect from a master out of his senses, or a servant whose attachment went the length of imbecility?

Fritz, perhaps, misunderstood them; the baron replied to his entreaties by a ferocious smile.

The light disappeared; the heavy door of the dungeon was closed, the rusty bolts glided into the grooves.

The two, however, returned, as if to be well assured that escape by any secret passage was impossible. The sound of heavy steps grew fainter in the distance; then silence reigned supreme.

Frantz tried to break the cords which bound him; but his recent illness, the fatigue which he had undergone for so many hours, had exhausted his strength. Vainly he tried to free his hands by rubbing the rope against the sharp stones. Besides, supposing they were at liberty, what use could they be to him? It would have been impossible for him—his prison was so strong—to break open

or force the door. As for helping Wilhelmina, it would be better, he thought, to leave her in her fainting fit as long as possible, for then, at least, it would save her from pain and thought.

Struck down by these dreadful reflections as much as by his physical debility, Frantz no longer stirred. By way of shaking off this lethargy, he called Wilhelmina; the sound of his voice, deadened by the vault, seemed to him unlike anything human. Wilhelmina replied not, and he lay as if in a swoon.

At last he heard a gentle moan at the other extremity of the dungeon, and an imperceptible agitation in the air showed the young man that his companion began to move. Singular contradiction of feelings! Frantz wished, only a minute before, that Wilhelmina would not awake from her deep sleep; but at the first sign of life she gave, he experienced a lively feeling of joy; his blood circulated more freely, his heart beat quicker, and his energy returned. He never uttered a word which might prematurely betray his presence.

Wilhelmina murmured, in a mournful voice—

"Where am I? How cold and thick the darkness is! Am I then dead? Is this the tomb?"

Frantz still kept silence; he would not hasten by a moment the time when the poor young girl would be in a state to comprehend the dreadful truth. He held his breath.

"This is strange," continued Wilhelmina, in moving about on the bench; "I am tied—and then this darkness, this death-like silence. Ah! I now remember—my brother, that unhappy man, revenges himself for my love of Frantz. I am without doubt in the dungeon where the unhappy Bertha died. But Frantz at least is saved! Oh, my God! thanks—he is saved!"

Frantz felt he could no longer prolong the illusion of his presence.

"Wilhelmina," said he, tenderly, "I am here to live or die with you!"

She was as terrified as if a spectre had spoken to her in the darkness.

"Whose voice is that?" at last she said, wildly. "Who is there?—that cannot be his. My brother!—is he right? Ought I to believe in the existence of supernatural beings?"

"Believe only in the power of God and the wickedness of men. Yes, 'tis I indeed, Wilhelmina; I, condemned like you,

to expiate our love, so pure, so beautiful. The fatality which weighs me down sinks you also; it overwhelms us. This is a moment to remember that we prefer dying together rather than living separated."

"Die! You, Frantz!" cried the young girl, with anguish—"you! born for great things, endowed with so many precious qualities, so well adapted to occupy an elevated position in the world. Your fatal love for a humble creature, unknown, has destroyed you."

"You have much greater cause to curse the day you first saw me, dear and noble girl. Without your attachment for a proscribed man, who drags after him everywhere grief and misfortune, you would still be on earth, beautiful and smiling; you would still command respect and affection."

"Do not blame me for having loved you, Frantz; no, no, do not blame me; for even here, in this obscure cavern, where we are about to perish miserably, far from the sight of men, this love has for me a sweetness and consolation infinite. You are right, husband; in contracting this union, we foresaw that they could not separate us, and we have preferred death even to this separation. Our prayers are heard, let us resign ourselves to die!"

She could not prevent a deep sigh, however, from escaping from her bosom. She soon continued:—

"Frantz, if you were near me, if I touched your hand, if I leaned my head against your shoulder, I should be better able to bear up against suffering and despair."

By a superhuman effort, Frantz succeeded in loosening the cord which had already resisted his attempts; disengaging his hands, cut and bleeding, he dragged himself towards that part of the dungeon where he had heard the voice of his companion.

"I am here, my angel," he murmured, passionately; "let our destiny be accomplished. I only fear for you."

He hastened to unbind Wilhelmina herself from her bonds, then he took her in his arms and embraced her tenderly.

Long hours passed; no change had taken place in the situation of the prisoners. In spite of their resignation, hope still hovered over them. The baron might have a lucid moment to repent of his atrocious vengeance; Fritz might consider the crime he had committed in

executing the cruel orders of his mad master. Again, this sudden disappearance would certainly be remarked, and give place to the most active search. They knew that they had two devoted friends in Madeleine and Sigismund; but when they came to consider the blind frenzy of the major, the stupidity of Fritz, the different circumstances which might lead their friends into error, this hope vanished, and at last the inexorable reality stared them in the face.

But Frantz did not wish to die without making some effort for the safety of Wilhelmina and himself.

In leaving the tavern he had provided himself with a knife, and they did not care to deprive him of it. With this feeble instrument he attacked the door.

Prisoners with less favourable tools have been successful in working their deliverance, but these prisoners, to accomplish similar enterprises, had both more time and strength. Frantz was exhausted, and his wounded hand refused to help his courage, so he was compelled to give in; he was entirely wanting in strength. The knife, already notched by the ironwork, dropped from his fingers.

Wilhelmina made him sit down, and she tried to continue the work which he had begun, in spite of the entreaties of Frantz; but she gave up in despair. After an hour's labour, the two young people had hardly scratched the stout planks of the door.

They had no light to assist them, and even with it many days would have expired before obtaining a result of such importance. Wilhelmina took hold of Frantz's hand, and said to him, solemnly, "Let us pray, husband—let us pray to God; He is our only hope hereafter."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

"MAKE HASTE TO HELP US; IT IS TIME."

They fell down on their knees, and to that Providence who protects the afflicted they offered up a fervent prayer. This duty performed, they sat down together on the rock in a corner of the cave; then with their backs to the wall, their hands entwined, they awaited their doom.

The night and a part of the following day passed thus; but nothing showed them that light succeeded to darkness in

this mournful tomb, where these two beautiful young people were interred alive.

Pressed one against the other, "they saw nothing but darkness, and heard nothing but silence," as a poet expresses himself. However, they still thought; their diseased imaginations wandered into strange, incoherent dreams, in which horror was intermingled with brilliant and delightful visions. Then again they resumed their waking thoughts, but as they were sad and hopeless, they kept them silent. Their hands affectionately pressed, they called to each other in a low, plaintive voice—

"Frantz!"

"Wilhelmina!"

Then the sound even of their breathing was absorbed in the funereal calm of the prison.

These interlaced hands, however, became damp and cold; their breathing difficult; slowly fever took possession of the two prisoners; the cold reached the very marrow of their bones. They were too weak to feel those terrible sensations entirely—those immoderate sensations which always accompany hunger.

Frantz tried to conceal the pain he suffered in this awful moment, when he felt that life was gradually gliding away; he only thought of sparing Wilhelmina the sight of seeing him die. But the young girl, not so well able to suffer, could not sustain the agony of hunger.

"Oh, how I suffer!"

Frantz took her in his arms, hoping to reanimate her by his tenderness. Frantz placed her on the bench, murmuring some unintelligible words; then he lay down at her feet and listened. Her moans continued.

All at once he got up; those rattlings in her throat, which he believed the precursor of death, threw him into a fearful state of distraction; he gave a sort of roar, and rushing towards the door, he tried to knock it down with blows. Not making any impression upon it, he walked about frantically, striking himself against the sides of the rock in the black darkness.

In this wild course he stumbled over a wooden stool; seizing it mechanically, and returning to the door, he struck it violently. A low, heavy sound like thunder was echoed in the cave, but the door resisted, and the stool fell in pieces at his feet.

Uttering a shriek of despair and rage, he fell full length upon the ground.

When he recovered his senses, he raised himself upon his elbow in the midst of the darkness, and listened. The short, irregular breathing of Wilhelmina could be heard a few steps from him. The poor young girl had not yet ceased to suffer.

Frantz dragged himself towards her, and passed his hand over her face; he thought that she was plunged in deep sleep; her eyes were closed; she was insensible, although still breathing.

This sleep, the result of exhaustion and fatigue, gave Frantz time to collect himself. Soon, however, giddiness seized him in turn; his reason gave way to the fancies created in his brain by cold and hunger.

"She sleeps!" he muttered, "but when she awakes her torture will be redoubled. What shall I do then? Must I feel her close to me, panting, bruised, a prey to the most dreadful suffering, and still be unable to assist her? That punishment would be worse than death."

He crept about searching for the knife which he had thrown away after his fruitless attacks against the door; he found it, and was glad almost to know that the point was unbroken.

"Here is our safety," said he, wildly. "We have no hope left. She first, then I. All our sufferings will then be ended."

With one hand he clutched the haft of the knife, with the other he bared a place on the motionless breast of the young girl to stab her; but he began to doubt.

"If," he thought, "help should come. They told me when I was a child never to despair of the goodness of God. He who spoke to me thus was a holy priest with white hair and venerable features. He made me repeat the evening prayer in the park of Hohenzollern."

This recollection of his pure and happy childhood made him dream. He thought he saw, like a flash of lightning, laughing peasants, green and flowery fields, limpid lakes, the beautiful blue sky, friendly faces: he heard the murmurs of streams, the song of the nightingale, and the silvery sound of the village clock. But these charming scenes, these harmonious sounds, passed away rapidly; these sweet emotions were removed from his imagination by another attack of frenzy.

Once more he raised his knife to strike.

"Frantz! Frantz!" exclaimed a voice, melodious as an angel's, "take courage, we shall not die."

"What say you?" he replied. "The whole world abandons us."

"Heaven has not abandoned us, Frantz. Throw away, then, far from you that murderous weapon with which you wish to terminate my troubles. Your hand must not make my blood flow!"

Frantz was stupefied. How, in the midst of darkness so profound, the young girl asleep, could she have even suspected his intention? He had not expressed aloud his ideas of death. Wilhelmina, however, spoke decidedly without a trace of delirium. He obeyed mechanically, and flung away the knife far from him.

Then Wilhelmina sought his hand in the darkness, pressed it in her own, and continued, in an endearing voice—

"Courage! my fondly-loved husband; the power which revealed to me your despairing thoughts watches over us. During my sleep, the protecting stork of Steinberg—that blessed bird which saved my grandfather Robert—showed itself to me in the pure sky. It hovered above my head, tracing large golden circles like crowns. I was prostrate and mute. No voice spoke to me, still I felt my heart filled with a lively, holy hope. The noble bird disappeared in the immensity of space. My eyes sought for it here when I awoke beside you in the depths of this cave. I know not what revelation it made to me: I could neither see you, nor hear you, and yet I know your mind was filled with ideas of death. God has restored to me, all at once, strength and mind to announce to you that the gates of life and happiness shall open before us. Courage, then, once more! Leave the Supreme Being, who watches over the weak and the unfortunate, to act for us."

Wilhelmina fell back dying. "Divine and mysterious Power," he exclaimed, in a last spark of reason, and raising his arms above his head, "make haste to help us, for it is time!"

He fell insensible at the feet of his beloved wife.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE BARON AND THE HINKENDE.

MADELEINE advanced quietly, incited by that curiosity, of which, in the midst even of the most critical circumstances, a woman is never entirely deprived. Through the opening of a battlement she perceived what occupied the baron's attention.

The storks, whose return had revived a hope so long deceived, were now reunited in their nest. The family had increased since the spring; two young storks, still clothed in the down of their first state, moved about in the moss, raised up their bills the length of their necks, and made sounds like plaintive moans. Their mother, handsome and strong, flew about them, apparently uneasy and frightened.

The presence of the major so close to the nest at first sight looked as if it were the cause, but after looking at the mother and the young birds, it was clear that there was something else which caused this commotion.

The winged family was exclusively interested in the fate of another stork, lying dejectedly on the edge of the brick-work, his wings drooped, his feathers stained with blood.

By the dull expression of his eye, and the gradual weakness of his legs, his death appeared to be at hand. He, however, still kept upon his feet, his body, leaning against the turret, could hardly sustain itself. In this poor bird Madeleine recognised the head of the family—Baron Hermann's favourite—the hinkende, in fact—the wounded stork of the evening before—the victim of the major's insane anger.

A grain of lead had no doubt escaped Frantz's notice, and touched some vital organ. The bird, feeling himself mortally wounded, had used the little strength remaining to reach his nest, and die in it. Whatever it was, the female and her young, with that wonderful instinct which is attributed to this interesting species, seemed to understand the suffering of the poor hinkende, and foresee the termination. The young storks, surprised and uneasy at not receiving from him the usual attention, continued to make feeble and timid noises, very different from those they uttered when asking for food. The mother came and went about the male unceasingly—sometimes walking, sometimes flying, inviting him to take flight; often did she try as if to sustain him on her wings, as she did her young, so as to exercise them, and keep them in the air. But the wounded remained insensible to all these attempts; his countenance plainly said—

"I can do nothing for you, let me die in peace."

This strange scene taking place between heaven and earth, had an asto-

nishing effect upon Henry de Steinberg.

Anxiously did he follow the changes in this mute drama; every incident had a positive significance for him. Nevertheless, superstitious ideas resulting from his madness momentarily returned to him, for once he said aloud, looking at the hinkende—

"No, no, that cannot be the effect of animal instinct. Some devils have taken the form of these bird protectors of my family."

"These are no demons, my lord," said Madeleine, behind him; "they are poor creatures whom Providence has endowed with amiable qualities, to teach cruel men kindness and pity."

Henry was neither surprised nor irritated in seeing Madeleine. He made some sign to her to keep silent, and, keeping his elbows on the parapet, looked attentively at the place where the birds were.

The old woman did the same, noiselessly; the major's calmness looked ominously favourable. Perhaps a crisis was approaching which she was wise enough to perceive must not be precipitated.

The affairs in the nest became more lively and animated. The poor female redoubled her attention to the dying. The little ones tried to get upon their feet, to awake him out of his torpor, by repeating more frequently the low and plaintive note which formed their cry. But the hinkende never changed his position.

All at once the female opened her vast wings, took her flight, and rose perpendicularly in the air, making her bill resound again; she went like an arrow in the direction of the Rhine, and was soon lost to sight amongst the reeds which covered the banks of the river.

"She abandons him! See, she abandons him!" said the baron, addressing himself to Madeleine with bitter irony; "suffering horrifies even the brutes—they are ungrateful and cruel like men."

Without replying, Madeleine stretched her arm towards the point of the horizon where the stork disappeared.

At last, a white spot was seen at a distance in the haze; then the slight form of the stork rapidly grew larger, and the female reached the nest. She carried in her bill something which she placed before the hinkende. This was a fish with golden scales and red fins, still living and leaping on the dry moss.

At the sight of so beautiful a prey the

young ones, with open bills, rushed to secure it. The mother chastised them with a stroke of her wing, and again pushed the golden fish towards the invalid. The hinkende at first did not notice the present of his companion, but at last he looked sadly at the choice food which she offered him. By a great effort he changed his position, and taking the beautiful little carp of the Rhine in his bill, he pushed it towards the young ones.

The major and Madam Reutner noticed every little detail of this touching scene, which took place a few feet below them. Madeleine wished to see what effect the reciprocal tenderness of these birds would have upon the baron; his fierce and haggard countenance was wet with tears. She thought this a favourable moment to speak to him.

"My lord," said she, "let me implore you in favour of those two poor young people whom you have condemned to a horrible death. Heaven itself is softening your heart in placing before your eyes these good and timid birds. Look at the hinkende, my lord; he suffers, he is dying, yet still he thinks of his little ones; he knows he ought to be their protector, that he ought to forget himself for them, even to the very last moment. Like him, you are the head of the family; like him, you ought to be kind, indulgent, forgiving to your family. My lord, mercy and pity for your sister, for your brother. Let the example of a humble creature, deprived of intelligence, make you repent of your cruelty."

Henry de Steinberg listened to her attentively and without anger; two or three times he passed his hand over his forehead, as if to facilitate the deliverance of his thoughts.

"Is it you, Madeleine Reutner, who thus speaks to me?" he replied, still wandering a little; "do you really attribute to instinct alone the wonderful acts of these storks? You know indifferently the traditions of our family. These birds, whose emblem my ancestors have taken for their armorial bearings, are united to us by a supernatural bond. Woman, do you not see it? That which now takes place is magic. The evil spirit, formerly the friend of my family, has revolted against me; he surrounds me with illusions, in order to deceive me."

"Believe it not! believe it not!" exclaimed Madeleine, with unwonted energy; "everything exists but by the will of God. The intervention of the evil spirit is only

real in the tales of a poor old woman like me. Alas! I have been justly punished for my credulity, for my love of the marvellous. No, no, my lord, the last events which have taken place in your family should drive away all illusions—the storks of Steinberg have no influence whatever on the destiny of your family. They can neither remove misfortune from under your roof, nor bring to it joy and prosperity. Forget these poetical chimeras. After all, there is nothing more simple than the respect your family had for these birds. The lords of Steinberg were a fierce, turbulent, ungovernable race. One of its ancestors, wiser and more prudent than the others—Baron Robert, perhaps—had occasion, like you, to admire the touching instinct of the storks, the gentleness of their habits, and their tender affection for their young. He resolved to place continually before the eyes of his warlike descendants the example of these peaceable birds. He invented a fable to make a greater impression on their minds; he placed in his coat-of-arms the image of a stork; and he desired that a stork's nest should always be seen by these valiant warriors when they mounted the height of their proud tower. Such is the truth, my lord, stripped of those lies propagated by credulous and superstitious persons, and I was the worst of them."

The baron, his head leaning on his chest, listened to Madeleine in a dreamy way; but his attention was suddenly directed to the storks.

"Look," said he, startled and in a choking voice, pointing with his finger towards the hinkende, "he recognises me; he remembers that I, who should have been his protector, am in reality his murderer. See! how he fixes his eyes upon me. Have they not an infernal flame? He reproaches me with my cruelty; he reproaches me for taking him away from his mate, his young ones, his mossy nest, from the old tower where he was born, where he received the caresses of my grandfather. Can the creature, then, detest and curse me?"

Madeleine again leaned upon the parapet beside the baron. The hinkende, standing on the top of its nest, fastened upon Henry the same piercing, fixed, melancholy look which Frantz had already observed. The old housekeeper herself, notwithstanding her sage remarks on the subject of supernatural influences, could not defend herself against the attack of her ancient superstition. She felt herself

trembling, in contact with that spark which darted from the yellow eye of the bird.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

DEATH OF THE HINKENDE—HOPE.

THE wounded bird suddenly threw aside its torpor. Perhaps it remembered that twice already during its life, man had had the power of alleviating its sufferings; perhaps it obeyed the instinct of its species, almost domestic; however, the hinkende always raised its head towards Baron de Steinberg; and after slowly developing its undulating neck, it shook forcibly its drooping wings. All these movements were so graceful and so expressive; they were at once a painful lament and a caress, a sign of affection and a sad farewell.

"My lord," said Madeleine, with solemnity, "the feeling of hatred and vengeance belong only to men. The storks do not know these fierce passions; the hinkende knows not how to hate its murderer."

Whilst she spoke the baron continued to notice the movements of the bird. The flapping of its wings became more and more feeble; the undulation of its neck ceased by degrees; its red feet trembled under the weight of its body. At last it placed its head under its wing, as if going to sleep; then, in a second or two, it slipped down and remained immovable. At the same moment a flash of lightning divided the clouds above Steinberg, illuminating the sky; the female stork flew up hastily, and made three or four circles round the tower; the little ones uttered plaintive moans.

"He is dead!" exclaimed Henry, in a suffocating voice.

"Yes, he is dead," repeated the old woman; "and his death is for you, lord of Steinberg, an example of mercy and pardon, as his life has been an example of gentle manners and family affection. Will you, my noble master, allow yourself to be outdone in generosity by a bird? Pardon also; pardon your sister, the good Wilhelmina, whom you have condemned to the most frightful destiny, with her unfortunate husband."

The major slowly lifted up his head.

"Madam Reutner," said he at last, "what do you want from me? What are you saying about my sister? I do not understand you. Where am I, then?"

His voice this time was calm, his look no longer wild. He had recovered his reason, or at least one of those lucid intervals which attends mental alienation. But this happy event had for poor Madeleine a frightful compensation. He recollected nothing that had taken place during his madness.

She related to him rapidly all she knew or supposed, so as to aid the memory of her master. Henry only manifested surprise and doubt.

"You are dreaming, Madeleine," he said, smiling. "I never knew where this *Flucht-weg* is; my grandfather carried the secret with him to his grave. But how came I here? My head is heavy; I feel as if awake from a terrible sleep. Where is my sister?"

"Your sister!" exclaimed Madeleine, sobbing. "Have I not told you? You shut her up in a dungeon to die of hunger."

"It is, then, true? I have been mad; I have lost my reason. O God! have you reserved this misfortune for the last descendants of the Steinbergs?"

He fell upon his knees, and hid his face in his hands.

"But the *Flucht-weg*," repeated Madeleine. "My lord, recal your thoughts. The *Flucht-weg*, where last night you imprisoned your sister, where is it?"

"I—I am entirely ignorant. Oh! who will calm the throbbing of my brain? If you yourself are not mad, if you speak the truth, seek—seek! I know nothing. Where is my dear Wilhelmina?"

The old woman felt that it was useless to wait for any intelligence from her master. An idea suddenly occurred to her.

"My son was present," she exclaimed, "and saw everything; he has refused to tell me the truth, but he will tell you, if you command him to speak."

"Well, bring him here this instant."

Madeleine Reutner, in a voice which her anxiety rendered piercing, called her son; she received no answer. She rapidly descended the staircase, still calling out loudly, but Fritz did not show himself. She visited successively all the rooms; she crossed the garden, then the road which led to the village, looking on every side; she did not find her son—no voice replied to hers.

Then only did she remember a circumstance which the anguish of this day had chased from her memory: Fritz had left that evening for Heidelberg.

A cold perspiration rolled down her face. She ran to the stable—it was empty. Fritz only could have taken his master's horse.

"He is gone," said she, raising her eyes to heaven. "He cannot be back before to-morrow—it will be too late."

Again she ran to the outside gate of the castle; but she was sure that Fritz must have been some time on his way, so far, that from the height of the rock she could perceive no traveller. Nevertheless, as she was returning she remarked, on the serpentine road below her, several horsemen at full gallop; they directed their horses' heads towards the tower of Steinberg. Amongst them Madeleine recognised Sigismund and Ritter, who pressed on their horses, covered with foam.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THEY ARE SAVED.

SOME hours after, the two young married people were in the very chamber in which the terrible scene of the previous night had taken place.

Wilhelmina was lying, dressed, upon her own snow-white bed. From her paleness, her insensibility, she looked as if dead. Like her, Frantz, extended upon a sofa, gave no signs of life.

Solitude and darkness no longer reigned about them; several candles, placed by chance upon the furniture, gave a bright light; and a great number of persons waited with anxiety whilst those unfortunate victims of an act of madness recovered their senses. Madeleine Reutner, her eyes overflowing with tears, leaned over her young mistress, whom she sought to make warm again by her ardent kisses.

A personage clothed in black, with measured steps, went from one invalid to the other, trying by turns upon them the medicine contained in divers glass-bottles. This was the most celebrated physician in Mannheim.

Three or four persons, grouped about Frantz, seemed to take the most lively interest in his dangerous position. First, there was Sigismund, as pale, as exhausted almost as his friend; then the careless Albert; then, at last, the Chevalier Ritter, whose uneasy expression has some other cause besides the alarming state of the son of his sovereign.

The chamberlain looked frequently at another personage, of haughty mien,

covered with decorations, which he wore on his breast.

In the angle of that vast chimney which opened into the *Flucht-weg*, a man, erect and silent, leaned his head against the wall, as if not to see the sad picture: he was Major de Steinberg.

And lastly, near the door, in a kind of antechamber, two tall footman, powdered and laced, waited respectfully the orders of their master, the imposing personage who caused the distraction of the Chevalier Ritter.

In the midst of all these anxious and thoughtful people, Fritz Reutner went and came with his accustomed coldness. His countenance exhibited no trouble, no remorse. Obedient to the least sign of the doctor or his mother, he appeared to have entirely forgotten the part he had played in the fearful drama of which Steinberg was the theatre.

This tranquillity might result, perhaps, from the conviction that he had repaired the mischief. Fritz Reutner, in fact, had been the instrument by which the two prisoners were delivered. Sigismund, on arriving at the castle some hours before, had learnt from Madeleine of the imprisonment of his friend and Wilhelmina, the return to reason of the major, and the departure of Fritz; he did not hesitate to make another effort to save his friend.

Although overwhelmed with fatigue after so much travelling about, he instantly mounted his horse and set off in pursuit of Fritz.

He had no difficulty in overtaking him, for he went along quietly for fear of fatiguing his master's horse. The name alone of Major de Steinberg was sufficient to make the faithful servant turn his horse. It is easy to guess the rest.

The presence of Ritter and the unknown at the castle requires also an explanation.

After leaving Steinberg in the morning, Ritter, accompanied by Muller, went straight to Zelter's. There he received his twenty thousand florins, the price of the purchase of the barony. Muller received a regular acknowledgment for the payment, and immediately started for the village, where he expected to find Frantz. Ritter remained at the tavern, under the pretext of breakfasting and taking some rest. In reality, he waited the return of one of the police, whom he ordered to follow Sigismund at a distance, and to inform him, on his return, where the fugitives were concealed.

Muller, and the man appointed to watch his steps, had been gone a considerable time; the chevalier began to be very impatient for the return of his emissary, when a postchaise, drawn by four horses and escorted by two domestics, entered the peaceable village, and stopped before the tavern.

On seeing the personage who descended from it, and who was well known to him, the chamberlain exhibited the most marked discontent. The traveller, in fact, stood higher in the confidence of his sovereign than himself. This person, doubtless, was the bearer of new orders, and Ritter would be obliged to resign his power into the hands of the new-comer, at the very moment when he thought he was sure of conducting the affair of Count Frederick to a successful issue.

In the meantime, convinced that it was himself that was sought, the chevalier went forward and introduced the traveller into the tavern with the most marked politeness.

In truth, the prince's friend brought news of the highest importance for Count Frederick. He came direct from the Residence of Hohenzollern, and had followed Ritter's steps from Baden, thanks to the information of the police, to whom he had applied to execute his plans.

The two courtiers had a long conversation, and in spite of the jealousies they entertained of each other, it resulted in an ardent desire to discover the lost son. But how to do it? Ritter's spy had not returned; they had no means of knowing the route the fugitives had taken.

Their perplexity was soon ended by the sound of horses' hoofs on the pavement of the village. Sigismund, of course, found out his mistake, and remembering Madeleine's fears, he returned to make renewed searches in the tower. He had far outstripped the man sent to watch him; he arrived as rapidly as the lightning.

Ritter and the other courtier joined him.

This was the reason why so many assisted at the deliverance of the prisoners.

Wilhelmina was the first to open her eyes. An exclamation of joy was heard from all. Madeleine clasped her hands and looked to heaven.

The position of the curtains prevented the invalid from seeing the persons gathered together in the chamber. Her first look fell upon the friendly and familiar face of Madam Reutner; she smiled to her sweetly.

"Good morning, Madeleine," said she, as if awoke at the usual hour in the morning; "how happy I am to see you. Oh, what a frightful dream I have had! Oh, an awful dream!"

At the first sounds of this voice, the major moved as if to go near his sister; but the doctor stopped him with a frown. An explanation at that moment, in her present state of weakness, might prove dangerous. Madeleine, sobbing, could not restrain her rapture—

"She is saved! she is saved!"

Wilhelmina was still unable to comprehend the delight of the old woman. She appeared to reflect; then suddenly raising herself up and leaning upon her elbow, she asked quickly—

"Where is Frantz? Why have they separated us?"

Madeleine, instead of answering, drew aside the curtain, so that she might see the inanimate body of her husband. Wilhelmina could not contain herself at the sight; pale, her hair dishevelled, floating about her shoulders, she got off her bed, without taking any notice of the unknown persons who filled the chamber.

"He is not dead," she cried; "he cannot die when I still live."

"No, he is not dead," replied the doctor, endeavouring to lead her back; "but take care, my child, your unexpected presence might be fatal to him."

"You are certainly wrong, sir," exclaimed Sigismund, warmly. "The presence of the Baroness de Steinberg will have more effect upon him than all the medicines of the faculty. Look; the sound of that well-loved voice has been sufficient to reanimate him."

As he spoke, the blood, colouring his face, began to circulate more freely; his chest heaved at irregular intervals. The doctor admitted that the means prescribed by the faithful friend of Frantz were likely to succeed. A circle was formed around, and the result was awaited anxiously.

Wilhelmina, bending over her husband, spoke to him in the most endearing terms, and embraced him affectionately. Her efforts were successful, and in a short time he opened his eyes, and, as if by instinct, he returned the affectionate embraces he received.

At last, Frantz's attention was drawn towards those who surrounded him; but his ideas were too confused, his eyes were too weak, to recognise any one.

"Where are we?" he asked, in a low voice. "Wilhelmina, how did we get

away from that dungeon, so dark and so cold? Is there any one near us, and——"

"Your friends are here, Frantz," replied Sigismund, unable to keep silent.

"Yes, friends," repeated Albert; "and, by the blade of my sword, we have given more than one proof of friendship within the last few hours."

Frantz squeezed Muller's hand.

"Is it you, my brave, my generous friend, Sigismund?" said he, in an altered voice. "I have greatly repented not following your advice, having broken the promise I gave you. Pardon me, Sigismund, and you, also, Albert; for, if memory does not deceive me, I have given you much trouble. Good Madeleine, will you excuse me for having, by a rash step, compromised the life of your cherished child? But," he continued, "who saved us at last? who took us away from that prison where we were dying?"

"It was God," answered a melancholy voice—"God, who employed his mysterious power to restore a moment's reason to a poor madman."

Baron de Steinberg advanced towards them. Instinctively, they crept closer to each other; but their fear gave way to pity; the baron's hollow eyes and his livid cheeks were wet with tears; his features expressed the most harrowing despair. He stretched out his bony hands, and said to them—

"Brother! sister! mercy. I knew not what I did."

Wilhelmina and Frantz hesitated a moment; then, by a spontaneous movement, they threw themselves into his arms.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

LIGHT AFTER DARKNESS.

THE physician, using that authority which his profession gives him, put an end to those emotions by gently compelling the still weak patients to take some drops of his strengthening draughts; then he spoke of leaving them to take a little rest.

During the preceding scene, the Chevalier Ritter and the other courtier held themselves a little apart; they looked at each other mistrustfully. Seeing that Frantz was quite calm, they both approached towards him eagerly. Ritter was the first whom Frantz remarked; a bitter smile played about his lips.

"You have recognised me, Chevalier

Ritter," said he, quickly, "and this time I cannot escape you; but I now warn you that you will not separate me from my wife whilst I have life."

"It is not my intention, my lord," replied the chamberlain, with an appearance of the greatest respect; "if I have had to exercise painful duties against your excellency, I can to-day efface these involuntary wrongs in announcing——"

"It does not belong to you, chevalier, to fulfil the mission with which his Highness the Prince of Hohenzollern, my master and yours, has specially charged me for his august son."

Frantz then recognised this new personage, and was much astonished.

"Baron de Bentheim!" he exclaimed; "the minister, the confidant, my father's best friend?"

"Yes, my lord," replied the courtier, with a look of triumph at Ritter; "I am happy to see that your Excellency has not forgotten the name and the person of a faithful servant of your family. Often have I grieved in secret at the injustice you have suffered; alone at the Residence I have raised my voice against the despotism of your elder brother, who——"

"Do not speak of him in that manner," Frantz interrupted, mournfully. "I wish, if it be possible, to forget my complaints against my unjust brother."

"He has expiated them all," exclaimed Ritter, unable to moderate his impatience; "your brother is dead, some days since; he was killed, whilst hunting, in leaping a ditch. Hereafter you are heir presumptive of the beautiful principality of Hohenzollern."

Baron de Bentheim was not well pleased at being forestalled by his rival with this intelligence; but his regret was much diminished when he saw the effect produced by it on Frantz.

"Thus, then, gentlemen, you dispute together who shall be the first to announce this horrible event, supposing me capable of rejoicing at it. How vile must you think me!"

Ritter was utterly discomposed by this rebuff, but Baron de Bentheim was in no way disconcerted.

"This reproof does you honour, my lord," he replied, in an insinuating tone; "but I would not have consented to be the bearer of such sad news as the Chevalier Ritter has just communicated to you so thoughtlessly, if I had not been entrusted with another message more agreeable to my heart."

"And what is it, baron?"

"The prince, your father, in despair at the death of your elder brother, has felt deeply his severity towards yourself; he appeals to you, he entreats you to return to him to be the consolation of his old age. This is the letter written to you by himself."

He drew from a portfolio a letter with a large seal, and handed it to Frantz, who opened it and ran over the contents rapidly.

"Poor old man! How shall I be able to forget his want of affection towards me? He is unhappy. His attachment for his first-born perhaps blinded him, but his punishment has been severe."

"I shall obey him, baron," he continued, after a pause. "When I have recovered my strength, I shall obey him. It is a sacred duty. But I can only go accompanied by the Countess Wilhelmina, here present. I beg you to inform——"

"Frantz—Count!" exclaimed Wilhelmina, with warmth, "I do not wish to be a cause of annoyance to your family and yourself. What are honour, fortunes to me? It is you that I love—you only."

"My lord," said Baron Bentheim, in the most respectful manner, "I have the honour to inform you that everything shall be arranged according to your wishes."

Frantz stretched out his hand.

"Oh, thanks!" said he, joyfully. "Wilhelmina, my beloved wife, this is the destiny which I hoped for, which I dreamed of, for you. You married me poor, exiled, cursed, abandoned by all; you shall inhabit a palace, and you will be a sovereign princess."

"Frantz," whispered the young baroness, "shall we be happier?"

The light of a new day began to break. All those assembled, worn out with fatigue, took their departure. Frantz, not being in a state to be removed, remained at the castle, to receive, with Wilhelmina, the tender and eager attention of Madeleine.

EPILOGUE.

I.

SIGISMUND and Albert were sitting at the same table, in the same room at Zelter's in which we first met them when this history commenced.

With elbows on this table, covered with pewter pints and pots, they drank their beer and smoked their pipes.

It was evening, some days after the events which we have just related. The room was badly lighted by a small lamp; the two students could hardly be distinguished in the warm, nauseous vapour which enveloped them. Muller was even more silent than usual; thoughtful and reflecting, he did not trouble himself to reply to his petulant comrade. Schwartz then had all the conversation to himself.

"So then you know, comrade," said he, quietly drinking his beer, "the news received to-day at the castle? Those infamous courtiers have gained the cause; the old prince pardons his son's secret marriage, and Wilhelmina is recognised Countess of Hohenzollern."

Sigismund gravely nodded his head.

"You also know, doubtless, that the reigning prince recalls his son and daughter to live with him. Wilhelmina, in consequence of her brother's serious illness, cannot leave him; but Frantz, or rather his Excellency Count Frederick, must leave to-morrow; he will return afterwards, and bring back his wife in triumph to the Residence."

"Yes, yes, I know all that," replied Muller, smoking violently, as if he was a prey to some secret emotion. "I know he is going away."

"How have you learned this, when, instead of coming with me to the castle where we are so well received, you remain here shut up like a bear in his den?"

"The Baron de Bentheim——"

"Ah! that infamous wretch of a courtier still lodges here, and has told you. To hear him talk, he must have performed prodigies of diplomacy—to have brought about this result—at least, he tries to make Frederick believe it. Well now, comrade, and pray what part shall we take?"

"What part shall we take?" repeated Muller, in a changed voice. "To-morrow, when we have seen him pass in his carriage, with his armorial bearings upon it, we shall tighten our leather belts, and, stick in hand, we shall take the road on foot to Heidelberg."

"Heidelberg! How? do you think——"

"Have you not told me, more than a month ago, that you wanted again to admire the wig of the pro-rector, and that Doctor Sestertius would be seriously embarrassed at not seeing at his lecture your green coat out at elbows? Have you not an old quarrel with the night-watch, and——"

"Oh yes; still, I confess to you, I did not think that we should thus separate from—from our comrade of Hohenzollern."

"We must say farewell, and forget him; that is our duty."

And Sigismund turned aside his head as if to hide a tear.

"By the liberty of Germany, friend, Frederick is proud with you——"

"Silence, sir; do not insult him. Frederick is good, brave, honest, modest; but he is a prince. That is the only reason why I go far away from him, in spite of his entreaties; why I don't wish to see him."

Schwartz looked at his companion thunderstruck.

"And have you no favour to ask from him? You are not ambitious, then. In seeing you so eager to serve him, I thought you were acquainted with his rank for a long time. When one has a prince for a friend, he should not keep him all to himself. Do you really expect nothing for yourself in return for the trouble you have given yourself, for the dangers you have run for him?"

"Nothing."

"Well; I am not so disinterested. Those contemptible slaves—those courtiers I mean—informed me that their master could one day make my fortune. Upon my honour he should appoint me prime minister, in preference to those unworthy flatterers with whom he will be surrounded. Has he not seen with his own eyes with what dignity, with what grandeur I played my part as prince and canon? Why should I not fill, with even more distinction, that of minister? All I now ask is a fair trial, although I have always abhorred tyranny."

Sigismund was not listening to the ambitious designs of his companion. He had ceased smoking, and was lost in thought.

"But," continued Schwartz, "had you not some motive for sacrificing yourself in this way to Count Frederick? Let us see. Might he not have been by chance your superior in the holy society of the—— I mean that powerful society for which I have undergone so many painful 'proofs?'"

Muller shook his head.

"What!" exclaimed Albert, "has he no exalted rank amongst the initiated? He has pronounced those awful words, though. Well, Sigismund, in that case either you or I have been duped, or else why have you exposed yourself——"

"Because I loved him," said Sigismund, roughly; and two tears rolling down his cheeks were lost in his thick moustache. Albert, surprised to see the impassible, imperturbable student weep, looked at him with his mouth wide open.

"It surprises you," said Muller, angrily, "that I could like any one to weep for him. You know me not, nor ever could know me, you, the thoughtless, the ego-tist, the brawler, the boaster! But him, do you see, I loved him. Oh, I loved him with my whole heart! I believed that he was poor, obscure like myself; I hoped that I never would be separated from him. Everything about him pleased me; his gentle, modest manners, his frankness, his courage, even that melancholy sadness—I know not what caused it. When for the first time I learned his name and rank, I was not uneasy about it; I saw him driven from his family, proscribed, persecuted; I might help him, I thought, and I was glad of an opportunity to prove my friendship. But to-day he is rich, honoured, powerful, happy; and I weep, because a barrier separates us, because Count Frederick of Hohenzollern, heir to a sovereign principality, cannot be the equal, the friend of the poor student Sigismund Muller, the son of a humble village artisan."

"And why not, comrade Sigismund?" said a joyous, musical voice behind him.

The two students turned round; Count Frederick, still clothed in his simple and elegant costume of black velvet, entered the room. They rose hastily and with the greatest respect. Frederick went straight to Sigismund and took him by the hand.

"Comrade," said he, in a tone of voice that came from his heart, "you think me proud, yet you are prouder than I. You fly from me when I seek you; you refuse me your friendship when I come humbly to bring you mine. Which of us is the prouder?"

"My lord," murmured Sigismund, overcome; "your excellency——"

"Drop 'my lord,' and 'your excellency,'" replied the young count, impatiently. "I only wish to be your comrade, and I will be so still, in spite of you."

They cordially shook each other by the hand, and Albert himself came in for a mark of affection. Frederick in a joyous manner continued—

"When you will not come to me, Sigismund, why, then I must come to you; to-morrow I depart, and I am here to say

farewell for the present. Yes, my friends, I have left my poor brother, my beloved Wilhelmina, to pass the last evening at the tavern with you as jovial students. Come, a pint and a pot of beer for your Frantz. We shall again touch our glasses to our friendship, to our future."

He sat down familiarly between the two students, and the evening passed joyfully.

"He is gone," said Muller to himself; "but what matters it? He will always be my friend—I am happy."

"I am enchanted to see you so well pleased," said Schwartz, in a wheedling tone of voice. "The count has shown a decided preference for you, but I am not in the least jealous of you; I have not rendered the same services to him that you have done, and yet those which I have rendered to him can easily be recompensed by yourself."

"I! What do you mean?"

"Do you not understand me? Sigismund, have I not submitted long enough to these long, difficult 'proofs?' Do you not know how to advance the moment set down for my initiation? I have been pure, sober, honest—*purus, sobrius, prudens*—according to the order of that dreadful voice, which I heard the night of my presentation at the assembly of the elect. I have sacrificed for you my pretensions towards the charming Augusta—except one or two kisses by accident, of no importance. I allowed you to drink my beer, to smoke my tobacco. I consented to become prince and canon, in spite of my often declared love for the people and for the liberty of Germany; it is not my fault if I have generally been found capable of sustaining worthily all these high dignities. At the first intimation I resign my principality, my canonry. Without a murmur, I become once more the brave student. Say, then, if so many sacrifices, so many acts of obedience to the holy corporation of the initiated have not entitled me to become one of them."

At first Muller listened with surprise, but soon this expression disappeared from his countenance; no smile played upon his lips, his eyes alone sparkled with fun and malice.

"Albert Schwartz," said he, with solemn and affected gravity, "you are right. The time for proofs is past; you have fairly deserved your recompence."

"What!" exclaimed Albert, overcome with surprise and joy, "you promise me that on our return to the university

you will obtain for me the title of member of this illustrious society——"

"I shall not wait so long. Albert Schwartz, down on your knees."

"What! do you wish here—alone?"

"I use a right which our venerable rites have conferred upon me. But down upon your knees, I tell you."

Albert hesitated a little; however, he finished by consenting.

Then Sigismund carefully shut all the doors, even satisfying himself that the shutters were disclosing neither sound nor light; then returning with a majestic step towards his comrade, still on his knees, he said in a bass, sepulchral voice—

"Rise, Albert Schwartz; I declare you a Member of the Society of—*Fools!*"

At this shock, poor Albert fell back on his heels; a silvery laugh was heard behind the door; it was the young Augusta, who, unseen, assisted at the initiation of the new member.

EPILOGUE.

II.

THREE months have passed away.

Count Frederick, after having passed some weeks with his father, returned to Steinberg to take back his bride with him; but up to this moment the deplorable state of her brother's health had prevented her departure.

Henry, from the effect both of disease and remorse, was only the shadow of what he had been; his bodily strength, formerly so great, was completely undermined, and the physician from the first declared that his recovery was impossible. As Wilhelmina, in spite of her brother's severity, declared that she would not leave him, the young couple prolonged their sojourn at the castle, so solitary, so miserable, from the events which had lately taken place.

The baron's health grew gradually more serious, and a catastrophe was imminent.

At last it came. One day the unfortunate Henry, who had entirely recovered his consciousness, expressed a wish to be taken to the platform of the tower, as he said, "to have a last look upon the domain of my ancestors."

He had reached that stage of hopelessness when nothing is refused to the invalid. They hastened to gratify him.

It was now the end of August. The

sun had set. The climate of Germany had not belied its reputation; grey and cold fogs enveloped everything; a strong north wind blew in gusts.

The baron, seated in an arm-chair, his body well wrapped up, his face, pale and already discoloured by the approach of death, smiled mournfully at this natural darkness, a precursor of his own dissolution. Wilhelmina and Frederick, both rosy with health, but sad and thoughtful, stood on each side of him. Madeleine Reutner, leaning on the parapet at the other extremity of the platform, watched the invalid, ready to administer to his wants and wishes.

The majestic Rhine at this hour of the evening seemed to slacken its course; the reeds on the banks of the river made a feeble noise; the old tower itself, as the wind whistled through its loopholes, added to the extreme deadness of the scene.

In the midst of this solemn stillness something began to move in different parts of the horizon; a low and continual booming sound was heard, above and beneath the spectators, without their being able to understand what caused it. Not a star could be seen in the clouds; the twilight cast an uncertain light on the sky, the waters, and the solitary landscape.

By degrees the air seemed to become thronged; white objects, in numerous groups, moved about far away in the mist. Fugitive forms were seen between, slowly skimming the surface of the Rhine; many dense battalions came from all sides, whilst others seemed to have descended from the clouds. Earth, sky, water, seemed all at once, as if by magic, to be covered with winged phantoms. The booming became louder and more distinct, and those vague forms became more distinguishable the nearer they approached. The spectators at last understood, "*the flight of the storks.*"

It was the time of year when these migratory birds left Germany, all together, to pass the winter in a milder climate. The time and the hour were favourable to these migrations. There was nothing, then, extraordinary in their prodigious numbers around the castle. The circumstance of the near death of one of those Steinbergs who had adopted the stork in their coat of arms alone gave the event a mysterious character.

All these flocks of birds, following what looked like a preconcerted plan, flew to the same point—the narrow valley which was called "the valley of departure."

There they assembled, cracking their bills, the only voice they have when they are full grown. Many thousands were soon reunited in this chosen place; they covered entirely the valley, which, seen from the tower, seemed covered with snow. In the meantime, wherever the eye could reach, clouds of these travellers were approaching from all sides with outstretched wings. As the twilight gave way to night, the numbers gradually diminished, till at last only a few stragglers came with all speed, to reach the appointed place in time.

When all were assembled, a sort of swarming, supernatural noise was heard in the valley. All the large birds were huddling together in one place, flying about, jostling and striking each other in the confined space; they resembled a whirlwind which the eye could hardly distinguish.

Suddenly all this turbulent agitation ceased amongst the emigrants; they became silent, immovable, as if they awaited some chief, some signal, before they commenced their flight to the soil of Africa.

The female stork which had built its nest on the tower of Steinberg flew about. Since the death of the hinkende the young ones had grown up, and were now able to follow the troop in their long migratory journey. The mother, standing on one foot on the side of the nest, contemplated with her lively, brilliant eye the reassembling of her companions. Seeing them all reunited, she unfolded her wings, the young ones immediately imitated her example, and the family took to flight.

But instead of joining the rest, they hovered an instant over the tower, as if trying their strength; then they swooped round the platform, cracking their bills as a sign of farewell. Once, even, the female touched with her white wing the baron's shoulder.

The dying man was deeply affected; he said, in a low voice—

"Farewell, good birds, who have suffered so much from the hospitality of Steinberg; adieu, peaceable beings, whose destiny Providence has united to ours by an unknown bond. You will never return to this sad place where ruin and solitude will reign after me."

The bird continued her slow circular flight around them on the platform, as if she understood the words he had spoken. At last the stork and her family decided to leave the manor; they lowered their

flight, and disappeared in the darkness below the rock.

All at once a violent blast of wind was felt on Steinberg and all around. Then was heard a rolling sound like the waves of the sea at a distance. It was caused by fifty thousand strong wings striking the air at the same moment.

The storks had gone away.

When the last ranks of these winged travellers were hidden by the fog, the baron took the hands of Frederick and Wilhelmina, and pressed them to his breast.

"My brother, my sister," said he, in a solemn voice, "fate must be accomplished—the race of the Steinbergs is ended; that of the Steinberg-Hohenzollern begins."

And he died without a struggle.

Two days after, Baron de Bentheim conducted the two young people in triumph to the principality of Hohenzollern. Steinberg remained for some years after under the care of Madam Reutner and her son; neither wished to leave it, notwithstanding their attachment to Wilhelmina. But Madeleine died, and Fritz was called to Hohenzollern. The castle abandoned, shortly after became uninhabitable, and to-day, as we have before said, is a mass of rubbish.

The day on which the first child of the Princess Wilhelmina was born, two storks came to build their nest on the roof of the palace.

THE LAST SONG OF OSSIAN.

I.

HANG up the harp in Fingal's hall!

The breeze perchance in passing by,
Upon its murmuring strings may fall,
And wake again its melody.

For all the forms that lent it fire—

The glory of their deeds—are gone!
And why should Ossian tune his lyre?

Why should he linger here alone?

II.

The shout of war has died away,

The sword and shield are useless now;

For the great hero of the fray

Within the tomb is lying low;

And foes have come from other land

Who feared to hear his name before;

But now there is not left a brand

To drive them from his native shore!

III.

And shall I, Caledonia, view

Thy shrines debased by coward's peace?

And shall I string my harp anew,

To sing the praise of deeds like these?

No, let me die since I am old,

And cannot crush the foreign slave!

But let no other note be told

Than that which echoes o'er my grave!

HOW I SPENT ONE SUNDAY IN BRUSSELS.

By AN ENGLISH RESIDENT.

CHAPTER I.

BEFORE DINNER.

START not, gentle reader, as your eye meets the title of this article; I am not going to inflict upon you any of the "reminiscences" which the mere word "Brussels" is supposed to call up in the mind; it is not my intention to write one single line concerning either Waterloo, Napoleon, the allies, or yet the Duke; I purpose most religiously to eschew all mention of the "hard-fought field," or of the reliques—buttons and so forth—found thereon; of Hougomont I shall be dumb; and as for Shaw the Lifeguardsman, I shall utterly ignore such an individual. Nor am I going to lay before you any of those gossiping narratives yecept *Impressions de Voyage*, which, by the way, seldom impress any one, unless indeed it be with a sensation of weariness. I am a resident in Belgium, and as it is proverbial that residents are not sight-seers, you may feel assured that I am not going to retain you by the button while I pour into your unwilling ear a dull, prolix account of the "lions" of the Belgian capital or its environs—things that one can always find in a guide-book, when disposed for that sort of mental recreation. No, reader, of none of these do I purpose treating; it is my intention merely to relate for your amusement, if not edification, the adventures of a day—one day out of many that it has been my lot to spend in that very gay, very cheerful, in short, very delightful little city called Brussels.

There are in the romance of life many pages which most assuredly are not worth the trouble of perusal, many days which bring neither pain nor pleasure, and yet which require to be marked with a black stone rather than with a white one in our mental calendars. Sunday, the 5th of —, 18—, was one of these days for my friend Ned Donovan and myself, and probably also for many others as well, for that epidemic which we term *ennui*—to our shame be it said—numbers infinitely more victims on a Sunday than on the other six days of the week. Are you curious, then, most estimable reader, to learn how we spent this dominical day? Well, this is precisely what I am going to narrate, though I consider it my duty,

before we start, to warn you that my recital may indeed have the effect of inoculating you for half-an-hour or so with the malady under which I was suffering during the fifteen hours I spent between bed and bed. If, then, you feel yourself sufficiently courageous to brave the contagion, read; if not, cast aside the magazine, or rather, turn to another article.

It was ten o'clock precisely; I was at my post at the Café de l'Amitié. My post, you must know, is a rickety, worm-eaten piece of furniture, which formerly did duty as a card-table, but which, after many years of hard service, has now apparently been pensioned off to its present situation; but then the breakfast which the hungry resident finds upon it is in general excellent, and from its position at the window a very cheerful view is discoverable. With one hand I steeped a crusty *flûte* of bread, well overlaid with Anderlecht butter, in a cup of most delicious coffee, which Madam Dufoy, by a method peculiar to herself, is enabled to render superior to all the coffees in the world; in the other hand I held a production of the country, certainly not so agreeable as Madam Dufoy's coffee, but which we are no more able to dispense with than we are with our cigar after breakfast, although it be not more useful or salutary for the mind than tobacco is for the body; in a word, I was glancing over the columns of that morning's *Independance Belge*. At the moment when I had completed this double consummation, a well-known voice behind me suddenly uttered these words:—

"After you the newspaper, if you please."

The individual who had addressed me this laconical request was behind my chair. I turned round to give him the paper, and beheld a brother resident and fellow-countryman of mine—in short, none other than my very particular friend and crony, Ned Donovan.

"Holloa! is that you, Ned?" I exclaimed; "I did not see you before, but even if I had seen you I should most certainly have hesitated to put your name on your face, so completely unrecognisable does that enormous scar on your cheek render you. Have you been fighting a duel in spite of the laws?"

"Yes," replied Ned, "with my razor."

"And is it your razor that has gained the victory, most clumsy of Patlanders?"

"What would you have? In the detestable hole in which I am lodged one is obliged to shave with cold water."

"And this dirty shirt," interrupted I; "and this waistcoat, minus a couple of buttons; and this unfastened strap, and these ill-blacked boots, and this troubled countenance! My good fellow, will you tell me where and how you have passed the night?"

"I passed the night in my bed, or rather upon my bed, seeing that all the bed-clothes thought fit to beat a retreat during the night; an incident which has procured me such a cold in the head that I——"

Here a most convulsive sneeze cut short my friend Edward's sentence; he blew his nose violently, and continued:—

"I was going to say that I am indebted for both my cold in the head and my wound on the cheek to the thickheaded individual who fills the post of servant-of-all-work in the ready-furnished lodgings where for my sins I am located. This interesting specimen of humanity is a great fat country girl, who was imported last year into Brussels by a *pachter* along with a drove of oxen from Zeland Flanders. For these last six months have I persisted in giving her every evening an experimental lesson in her own peculiar and most detestable idiom, on the art of making a bed according to the recognised rules; but I lose my Flemish. There are, above all, three articles of my code of instructions which I despair of ever being able to drive into that obtuse head of hers: these are, *imprimis*, to impart to the mattress throughout the whole of its extent a perfectly smooth and horizontal position, equally exempt from all declivities as from all protuberances. Secondly, to carefully tuck in the bed-clothes underneath the mattress, so that the feet of the occupant cannot become uncovered, even should he execute a polka-step during the night in his sleep, in consequence of a troubled dream. Thirdly, to tuck in with the same care, on the side next the wall, the aforesaid bed-clothes beneath the aforesaid mattress, in order to spare the sleeper the disagreeable chance of occasionally bivouacing in his couch on account of the fall of the bed-clothes. The non-performance of this last article has already caused me three colds in the head since October last. As to these sears, I avoid

them as much as possible by only shaving once a week, for it is no easy matter to obtain a jug of hot water from my old landlady: as well might one attempt the conquest of the *eau merveilleuse*, which is guarded by the fiery dragon of the fairy tale."

"I begin to think, Teddy, my boy, that you have got out of the wrong side of your bed this morning," observed I, in my turn. "I'll engage you have not breakfasted."

"I never breakfast now," observed Edward, with a most pitiful countenance; "and it is my old crone of a landlady that has obliged me to give up this most salutary and excellent habit. The coffee was execrable, her milk was baptized, her rolls were always burnt. I swallowed all, however, breakfast being my favourite meal; but one day I made the discovery that the old lady, who for some time back has been afflicted with a confirmed asthma, had contracted the habit of blowing upon the milk, under the specious pretext of checking it when coming too quickly to the boil; and another no less agreeable one, of pawing my rolls in her dirty hands, in order, as she pretended, to ascertain if they were hot enough when she withdrew them from the oven. You can comprehend that after such a discovery it became impossible for me to swallow a breakfast prepared at home."

"Out of all this," said I, interrupting my friend's flow of eloquence, "I deduce this triple moral for the especial benefit of all bachelors occupying furnished lodgings in Brussels, to wit: Always to remake your bed with your own hands; to get shaved by a barber; and to take your breakfast every morning at the Café de l'Amitié in the Place Royal. You see, most worthy *compère*, that I practise what I preach—at least, as far as regards the third article of my moral," added I.

"And I am about to follow your sage counsel," replied the *balafre*. "*Garçon*," he shouted, "*une jatte de café, et quatre pistolets!*"

After breakfasting *tête-à-tête* with my friend Edward, I accompanied him to his lodgings, where he had some little matters to arrange before noon. For want of something better, I took up a volume of one of Sue's interminable Mysteries to pass away the time while my friend, with the assistance of the boot-hooks, was engaged in struggling into a pair of new boots which pinched him horribly. Scarcely had this operation been accomplished, not without a great loss both of

temper and animal moisture, when the tailor arrived, bringing with him a new coat to be tried on: here was another operation! Edward having with the assistance of the tailor worked his way with the greatest precaution into the new garment, proceeded, as is always the case with every one trying on a new coat, to a warfare of contradictories with this latter functionary, the result of which was that the coat fitted admirably, according to the schneider's opinion, and wretchedly according to Ned's. The first vaunted the superior quality of the cloth, the perfect elegance and "style" of the cut; the second, on the contrary, affirmed that the cloth was of secondary quality, that the collar was too high, the waist too long, and that the skirts crossed in such a manner that one was completely hidden by the other. Being appealed to by the belligerents, I gave judgment in favour of Edward, to the great disgust of the tailor, who then declined my interference.

"The proof that monsieur is unacquainted with the nature of a correctly-fitting garment," said the scamp, most politely, "may be seen in the fit of his own coat, which is cut as if his measure had been taken on a sentry-box!"

"Oh, Stohwasser!" thought I, "with what a smile of disdain wouldst thou have greeted this impertinent criticism of one of your chef-d'œuvres!"

As for myself, I felt greatly inclined to correct the insolence of the miserable snip who had thus dared to call into question the merits of my A 1 frock; but Edward spared me the trouble, by showing both him and his coat to the door.

"There appears to be some extraordinary fatality connected with my coats," exclaimed my unfortunate friend on the departure of the tailor. "Do you know, this is the sixth coat that I have had made for me during the last three months by six different tailors, and I have been obliged to return every one. What makes this last event more annoying is, that I have been invited to a ball this evening, where I have been promised an introduction to a young girl whom I have met two or three times casually in society, but whose more intimate acquaintance I particularly wish to make; and now I shall be obliged to send an excuse on account of that infernal tailor and his coat."

"And serves you right, too," interrupted I, "for employing one of these Belgian snips. Why don't you get your coats

from Town, as I do? But there is some one knocking at your door."

"Monsieur, the blanchisseuse has come for the clothes," replied a voice outside in answer to Edward's summons.

"Another bother! Hang these French-women! they will come for everything on a Sunday," muttered Edward to himself. Then he replied aloud:—"Tell the blanchisseuse that she must wait five minutes."

The five minutes lasted half-an-hour. Shirts, collars, stockings, waistcoats, pocket-handkerchiefs, gloves, &c. &c. &c., had to be looked up, counted, and re-counted; this done, a list had to be made out, and then a duplicate; finally, the collection had to be crammed into a bag and tied up. I had resumed my "Mysteries" with a fearful yawn, having previously taken the precaution of inhaling a huge pinch of genuine Lambkin from my friend Ned's snuff-box as a specific against somnolency.

The bundle of dirty linen despatched, Edward completed his toilet without further interruption, and we sallied forth.

"Towards which point of the compass shall we take our flight, George?" demanded Edward, when we had reached the street.

"It is all the same to me, Teddy, my boy," replied I.

"You never will have an opinion of your own," growled Edward.

"Come to the Park."

"I hate the Park on a Sunday."

"Well, then, the Boulevard."

"There's not so much as a cat stirring on the Boulevard at this hour."

"What say you to the Café, then?"

"It's too soon."

"To church?"

"It's too late."

"You see, Master Ned, it is perfectly useless for me to have an opinion of my own. Let us decide by the judgment of the hat."

"Be it so," replied Edward; and taking off his beaver, he spun it round on the end of his cane.

"It stops opposite the Rue de la Madeleine," said I.

"Pardon me," objected Edward, "it stopped in precisely the contrary direction; it is the buckle we must go by."

Faithfully abiding by the judgment of the hat, we pursued our way up the Montagne de la Cour. A group of individuals of both sexes had collected in front of the large window of a printseller's

shop; a single glance sufficed to show us that they were provincials. Having nothing better to do, we also affected to be engaged in examining the collection, while in reality we examined but the persons. Their attention seemed to be particularly attracted towards some of Danton's statuettes, of which there were several exposed for sale.

"Oh, look!" exclaimed an individual of the group; "there's Victor, in the overture of the *Serpens Amoureux*."

"No, no," replied another, "it is the caricature of one of our deputies."

"Bah! he is playing the fiddle," said a third.

"It is, perhaps, in a metaphorical sense of some kind that the designer of this statuette has represented his subject as playing on the violin," said, in his turn, a gentleman in a seedy black coat, whose back only was visible, but whose voice was familiar to us.

"The point in dispute, however," he added, "can easily and quickly be determined; we have but to decipher the Greek characters which I can discern at the base of the statuette. Let's look a little closer. The first letter I perceive has the form of a P, but it is an R, for the Greek capital R and our P are as like as two drops of water; the second and the fourth are both *alphas*, the third *gamma*, so that we have in the first place *raga*. The four remaining letters are two *nus* and two *iotas*, which make *nini*—thus we have *Raga* and *nini*. This, gentlemen, must either be modern Greek or else Cos-sack, for I, who read Homer and Anacreon as you would your paternosters, I am unable to decipher the meaning of these two words, *Raga*, *nini*! No, decidedly I cannot understand it," repeated he, lowering his voice and tapping his forehead with the ends of his fingers. "*Raga*, *nini*," repeated he once more, as he turned to leave the place; but in consequence of this movement he suddenly found himself face to face with Edward and myself. We recognised him in an instant as a teacher of languages from whom we had taken lessons in Flemish on our first arrival in Belgium, and who had lately been appointed a professor of something or other in one of the Belgian colleges.

"What!" he exclaimed, as soon as he caught sight of us; "is that you, Monsieur Donovan? and you also Monsieur K——?—how glad I am to see you, and all the more so just at present as I have a favour to ask you." Thus speaking he took pos-

session of an arm of each and led us towards the Park, where already a fair sprinkling of the Belgian fashionables had collected. "I was saying, gentlemen," resumed our professor, "that I had a favour to ask you, but in the first place let me tell you that I have been so fortunate as to obtain at the last *concours* the professorship of poetry at the College de —; three thousand francs a year, besides extras and perquisites! I am a rich man at last. I have been installed there for these last six months, and have already composed three works: *primo*, a translation of the orations of Demosthenes into French verse; *secundo*, a prose translation of the *Iliad* of Homer; *tertio*, a general history of the *Pays de Waes* from the earliest period to the present time. But tell me, Monsieur Edward, who is that pretty girl who bowed to you just now with such a smiling countenance?—*lasciva puella*!"

"Only a young lady of my acquaintance."

"I should like to be able to say as much. Well, it is to superintend the publication of these works that I have come to Brussels, and also to refresh myself a little after my literary labours, and make a few conquests among the *femineum genus*; for in the species of monastery in which I am enclosed there is no recreation of any kind to be had. You will aid me in unnesting some pretty dove, will you not, *mi sodes*?"

"Is that the favour you had to ask me?"

"No, but your pretty acquaintance of just now put the idea into my head." At this moment Edward again saluted two young ladies that passed. "What! you know these ladies also! O mortal, thrice and four times blessed. You have then your Ovid's *De Arte Amandi* by heart?"

"That's more than you have, I should imagine," retorted Ned.

"Why so?"

"If you knew anything about Ovid you would proceed in the first instance to a tailor, and in the second to a shirt-maker. From the tailor you would procure a coat of a cut and style less scholastic than the one you have now on your back; and from the shirtmaker a garment with a collar less mountainous, and above all whiter than the one now about your ears."

"You are joking surely, gentlemen."

"Edward is quite right, my dear professor," said I, in my turn. "I give you

my word of honour that you will never make a single conquest among the *femineum genus*, as you call them, with such a coat or such a shirt collar. And if I might be allowed to offer another suggestion, I think were you to remove from your nose those huge blue spectacles, which impart to your physiognomy such a lugubrious tint, you would be all the better for the change."

"You are both of you mad, my dear gentlemen. I am very well as I am; a classicist ought not to be dressed as a romanticist; a professor ought not to be attired as a *feuilletoniste*. But to return to my works; the favour I had to demand is simply this: knowing that you possessed some acquaintances in Brussels connected with the Belgian press, I thought perhaps you might be able to use your influence in the literary world to give my works a lift. There would be nothing to prevent you from suggesting a little laudatory article in one of the reviews, and you might glide in a few biographical notes upon the author; this would help the sale of the works amazingly—you understand?"

"I understand perfectly," replied Edward; "but I fear the public would laugh both at the author and his panegyrist, for after all you must allow that it is a whimsical idea that of translating Demosthenes into verse, and Homer into prose, and what your countrymen would call *rococo* in the highest degree. I appeal to my friend K—— here."

I made an affirmative sign of the head.

"Well, we'll say no more about it," said the professor. "On second thoughts I'll puff my works myself; besides, you would not understand them; novel-reading and magazine-scribbling destroys the taste for the beautiful, the classic, and the true!"

There are many originals in the world whose conversation, amusing enough for the first quarter of an hour or so, becomes after that period dreadfully wearisome and insipid. Our original was of this species. While conversing in this strain he had clung all the while most tenaciously to my right arm, while his opposite member was firmly hooked in that of my friend Edward. After several abortive attempts to part company, I succeeded at length in casting myself adrift, and making a half turn behind him I ranged up alongside Master Ned, to whom I administered a slight nudge on the elbow as a signal of impatience. My friend by

the same means gave me to understand that our sensations on this point were reciprocal, and at the same time cast at me an oblique glance, which said as plainly as glance could say—"How are we to get rid of this bore?"

To this signal of distress I responded by a certain oscillatory motion of the head, which might be interpreted—"I'll discover some means or other by-and-by."

During this mute colloquy the professor recited to us a piece of verse which he had addressed to a lady on her birthday, when offering her a pot of wallflower—rather a strange birthday present, by the way. I retained three lines of this delicious fragment, and here they are, word for word—

"Accorde un doux baiser à Baptiste fidèle,
Qui vient te présenter ce petit pot de fleur,
Dont ta rare beauté surpasse la couleur!"

"Oh! too faithful Baptiste," murmured I within myself; "happy are those who can grant you a kiss of adieu!" All at once a sudden inspiration seized me, and pointing with my stick to the clock on the tower of Caudenberg, I exclaimed, with well-feigned astonishment, "What! two o'clock already! We must be off, Ned; it would not do to keep the old people waiting dinner for us, and you know they dine early on Sunday."

"By Jove, yes! we must be off," repeated Edward, and his countenance suddenly lighted up as if a ray of hope had that moment beamed upon it.

"Where are you going to?" inquired the professor.

"To the other side of the town, not far from the Porte de Lacken," replied I, at a venture.

"Well, it's all the same to me which way I walk; I will accompany you to those inhospitable regions," said our bore, to my intense disgust, and he took a firmer grip of Edward's arm.

There was no help for it, so we were obliged to set sail incontinent for the Porte de Lacken. On our reaching our destination I found myself in a state of considerable embarrassment: it was absolutely necessary to come to an anchor somewhere under pain of being convicted of deliberate and premeditated falsehood; but not a single acquaintance did I possess in this quarter of Brussels: this time Edward came to my assistance.

"This is the house," said he, pausing opposite the door of a sort of Gothic villa; "you will excuse us, but we are obliged to leave you here."

But our bore would not let go until the last moment. With his own hands did he ring the bell, nor was it until the door was opened that he finally cast us adrift.

"Farewell for the present," said he, as he moved away; "I shall expect you this evening at the *Eperon* between eight and nine."

"We shall be sure to be there," replied I, politely. "You may wait a long time for us, old fellow," I added, *solto voce*, in my mother tongue.

"Do you wish to see M. Traque?" said a boy with a face the colour of a chimney-sweep's, and who held in one hand a gun-barrel and in the other a cleaning ramrod, from the end of which kept dripping a liquid as black as ink.

Ned replied in the affirmative.

"Walk in, gentlemen; I'll call him directly."

We entered an apartment, in the semi-obscurity of which I could just distinguish a wolf's head, and what appeared to be the jaw or face of a wild boar, appended to the wall; two hideous trophies which formed a fitting termination to a row of stuffed birds of all species, from the wild swan to the wren.

"It would appear that your M. Traque is a regular Nimrod," said I to Edward, calling his attention as I spoke to the strange ornaments which decorated the apartment.

"Hush! here he is," replied Ned. I turned round and beheld a gigantic individual, clad in a green coat, green trousers, green waistcoat, and green cap—a green man, in short: as to form, the gentleman resembled a stout Walloon peasant. He appeared to me to be about forty years of age, though he was in reality more than fifty.

The moment he caught sight of Edward he stretched out his left arm horizontally, and raising his right hand to the level of the eye, in the attitude of a sportsman preparing to fire, he cried—

"BANG! I have been on the look-out for this hare a long time."

At that instant a huge dog, which had followed him into the room, but which had held itself rigidly at a dead point while his master was taking aim, on hearing the "bang" sprang suddenly at Ned's throat, apparently under the impression that the game was perfectly legitimate.

"Here, Diamond, Diamond! let go, sir; let go, you brute!" shouted M. Traque with all the strength of his lungs, administering at the same time a vigorous

kick on the stern of the animal, who retired sulky and growling. My worthy friend had got off with the loss of a shirt-front—a sort of complicated grill, which Diamond had carried away with him as a trophy of his victory.

"As many killed as wounded; nobody dead, eh?" inquired M. Traque.

"No; only my shirt wounded."

"Quelle bonheur!" ejaculated M. Traque.

"Yes; that's what one calls Flemish happiness," muttered Ned in English.

"Never mind," continued the gallant sportsman; "I am going to open a bottle of wine from the good corner of the cellar; that will set your nerves to rights, and mine too, for to tell you the truth I was really afraid for you." And he proceeded towards his cellar, singing as he went a snatch of some old sporting *chanson*.

Madame Traque now made her appearance. She seemed much younger than her husband, and as well as I could perceive rather pretty, but awkward and embarrassed in her manner.

"I am afraid some accident has happened," said she, with a sort of boarding-school curtsy.

"It is nothing at all, madam. I had on a frilled shirt, which was not exactly the fashion, and Diamond took the trouble of easing me of it, that's all; it is so much the less work for the sempstress."

"That horrid dog is always doing some mischief. I regret——"

"Permit me to introduce a fellow-countryman of mine to you, madam; my particular friend, George K——; and to you also, M. Traque," he added, addressing himself to the worthy individual of the name, who at that moment entered the room, a bottle under each arm, and his hands full of wine glasses.

"Are you a sportsman, sir?" were M. Traque's first words to me.

I thought of Don Quixote, who demanded of every comer, "Are you a knight-errant?" and making an effort to keep my countenance, I replied—

"Why, yes, monsieur, I am a bit of a sportsman."

"Parbleu!" added M. Traque, "I think I recognise your face. Did you not make one of a shooting party about three years ago in the Woods of Sambre?"

"Yes."

"Then give me your hand, for it is to you I owe my life!"

I stared in astonishment, but gave him my hand. He continued—

"We had formed a chain round a hill in the midst of a very dense underwood. I was posted in a narrow pathway that led through the thicket; you were about twenty paces on my left in the same path. I had taken up a position behind a huge oak tree, scarcely daring to move or even to breathe. All at once a hare popped out the tip of her nose between the bushes; I let fly at her—your servant, sir! she was off in a jiffy. At the same instant a roebuck crossed the path to my left; I saw the muzzle of your fowling-piece in a point blank level with my head. I thought it was all up with me, for if you fired you would most infallibly knock over at the same shot both man and beast, and if you delayed only a quarter of a second the roebuck would gain the thicket, in which case it would be a hundred chances to one if you hit her. Had I been in your place, I tell you frankly, I do not think I could have retained my shot; you did so, however, and to that presence of mind on your part I owe my life."

"You have not told the whole story," said I, for the recollection of the fact had returned to my mind during the course of the narrative; "you have not said what became of the roebuck!"

"The roebuck? We ate him next day with *sauce aux cornichons*," replied M. Traque.

"How was that?" exclaimed Edward, quickly.

"Monsieur K—— let him cross the path at his ease, and then fired on a calculation into the thicket; we found him lying stone dead about ten paces from my oak. It was one of the most beautiful shots I ever saw in my life."

"Bravo! I did not know you were so good a shot, K——," said Edward.

"Oh, I am not much given to boasting," said I, bridling up a little at the compliment.

M. Traque uncorked one of his bottles, filled the glasses round, and taking one in his hand and lifting his cap from off his head, he gave the following toast:—

"To the health of Monsieur Georges K——, whom I here proclaim Doctor, *avec grande distinction*, in the faculty of sport, both of bird and beast."

"I accept the diploma with gratitude," said I, thinking of Don Quixote again, as I hob-nobbed with M. Traque.

We had emptied our glasses and replaced them on the table, when Madame Traque, who had not as yet opened her lips, suddenly took the word, and, to my

utter astonishment, started off in the following extraordinary fashion:—

"The roebuck possesses more grace, more vivacity, and even more courage than the stag. Its eyes are more brilliant and appear animated with a more lively sentiment. The roebuck is of a domestic nature; the sire, dam, and young ones live together in one family, and are never seen to associate with strangers. At the pairing season, which takes place once a year, in October, they do not exhale, like other varieties of the deer tribe, any strong odour, nor have they the fury of the stag. They require movement and plenty of air and space; they thrive well with one female in a park of about two hundred acres. We have in Europe but two varieties of this species; the red, which is the largest, and the brown, which are marked with a white streak behind."

After having declaimed this beautiful tirade—taken word for word from Buffon—like a school-girl reciting her lesson, Madame Traque was silent, and cast upon her audience a glance of proud satisfaction.

Ned was stupified; he affected to blow his nose to prevent himself laughing outright; as for me, I preserved sufficient command over my countenance to observe politely:—

"It would appear that madame is well read in natural history."

"Oh, she has her Buffon at her fingers' ends," replied M. Traque, with charming simplicity. "I gave her a superb edition for a wedding present. Whenever I bring home a rare bird from my shooting excursions I am not sorry to have some one at hand who can tell me what it is. The other day, for instance, I brought down a singular bird; he flew with his beak open from ear to ear, and made a humming noise like a spinning wheel."

"The *crapauds-volants*, otherwise called *engoulevents*," interrupted Madame Traque, speaking very quickly, "are plentiful, and yet are not common anywhere; they are found in, or at least visit almost every portion of our continent. Sometimes they perplex the sportsman by turning round and round some tall leafless tree in a rapid and irregular flight, when they may be seen alternately rising and sinking. They are at these times most probably giving chase to the numerous insects which flutter round these sorts of trees, but it is seldom that they can then be approached within gunshot; on the advance of the sportsman they invariably disappear, as if by magic, without his being

able to discover the place of their retreat."

It was my turn now to blow my nose; Ned did the same. But I found it impossible to repress altogether a slight outbreak of convulsive laughter; fortunately, however, this breach of etiquette escaped observation, being drowned by the noise made by Edward's nose, which resounded through the apartment like a horn of chase.

"You have got a bad cold, Monsieur Edward, but here is a specific which will soon cure you," said M. Traque, presenting a bumper of wine to my friend and making me a sign to empty mine.

Just as we raised our glasses to our lips, the lady sought to resume her discourse.

"The *crapaud-volant* rarely perches—"

But she was suddenly stopped short by a loud report, followed by a rushing noise and the instantaneous discharge of a cascade of wine, which fell from Edward's mouth in a rosy shower on the carpet.

My unfortunate friend, in his efforts to restrain his merriment, had blown up; he endeavoured to excuse himself, but *vox faucibus hæsit*.

"Never mind, never mind," said the good-natured M. Traque; "it's all the fault of your cold, you sneezed at the critical moment and the wine went the wrong way."

"Yes—it was—my—hor—horrible—cold," stammered Ned, cramming his pocket-handkerchief into his mouth, at the risk of immediate suffocation.

When this access of merriment was a little calmed, the imperturbable naturalist resumed:—

"I said, then, that the *crapaud-volant* rarely perches, but when he does do so he places himself not across, like other birds, but longitudinally upon the branch, which he seems to *cocher* or *cocher*, like our domestic cock, when he——"

Here Ned broke out into a tremendous fit of convulsive coughing. "Upon my word, I cannot contain this dreadful cough any longer (coughing fearfully), I beg a thou—thou—sand pardons, but really I——" Another explosion of catarrh cut short his apology.

"It is time for us to be moving," said I; "we have got to be somewhere at four o'clock," not for the life of me knowing where that mysterious somewhere might be.

"Well, stop and dine with us; you will then be somewhere at four o'clock," said M. Traque.

"Impossible, to-day," said Edward, in his turn, "they will be waiting dinner for us." So saying, he seized his hat and stick and moved towards the door; I followed him.

"Well, promise me at least to come, both of you, some time next week, never mind the day. We have always some piece of game on the spit. My wife will finish her story of the *crapaud-volant*, and I will tell you a thousand anecdotes of Belgian sport and sportsmen; I have a rich collection in this head of mine, Monsieur K——, I can tell you."

"I am not ill-stocked myself," rejoined I, "but, unfortunately, I do not possess your talent in storytelling."

"Never mind, you can try," said M. Traque, encouragingly.

"He tries but too often," said Ned; "you cannot talk with him for a quarter of an hour without being treated with a chapter from his sporting reminiscences."

"Nor with me without hearing a chapter of natural history," said Madame Traque, laughing.

"We shall get on famously together," observed M. Traque, "for I think we have all of us got pretty nearly the same hobby. And so, gentlemen, I shall expect you some day next week to dinner."

We took our leave of this worthy couple—true types of Belgian hospitality and *bonhomie*—and when M. Traque had closed the street door behind us, we heard him singing as he moved away:—

"Chasseur diligent,
Voici l'aurore," &c.

"He is as good a fellow as ever lived," said Edward, "but a great bore."

"Well, do you know, I think him very amusing," was my reply; "and I pardon the professor for having brought us whether we would or no to his door."

Upon this we proceeded to dinner, of which necessary repast, kind reader, I will spare you all description, in consideration of the exemplary patience you have given proof in following me thus far in the recital of my day's adventures.

CHAPTER II.

AFTER DINNER.

IT is a very beautiful and comfortable invention, that of friendship. Unfortunately, Cicero has said and proved this before me, but I pray you to believe that

this is not my fault; if it had so happened that Cicero had come into the world after me, I should have said and proved the thing before him. In the domain of literature at the present time, nothing, no not even that little dot which I have placed at the termination of the preceding sentence, is left to be created; we are all born plagiarists, and from the most elevated of our historians—prophets, if you like it better—down to the most diminutive of our magazine scribblers, we all come under the *servum pecus* of old Horace. Our whole literary merit consists in disguising our plagiarisms with more or less skill.

But whatever be the reflections of Cicero anent the point, I shall always affirm and maintain that if friendship be desirable, it is principally so between bachelors of riper years.

What would become of me, for instance, if I had not my friend Edward Donovan? and what would my friend Edward do if he had not me?

When a man has neither wife nor children to love, nor valet to scold, it is absolutely necessary that he should have at hand some being or other whom he can love or scold, according to the state of his digestive organs; to whom he can say *old fellow*, or *don't bother me*, according to the variations of the barometer; to whom he can chat confidentially of his hopes and fears; from whom he can ask friendly counsel to have afterwards the pleasure of following his own; a being, in short, whom one can flatter, snub, praise, blame, tease, or coax, on the condition of being flattered, snubbed, praised, blamed, teased, and coaxed in return. This being is called a friend, and these mutual licences are the conditions which we are obliged to subscribe to on entering that peculiar bond of union called friendship.

I entertain a sincere friendship for my friend Edward Donovan, as does Edward in his turn for me.

After having taken part in the general *skrimmage* of a table d'hôte, we returned to the park. This park, you must know, reader, is the grand resource of all the idlers of the capital. On this particular evening my friend Ned was decidedly suffering under an infliction of what we term the blue devils, or, shorter, the "blues," but what our neighbours on the other side of the Channel persist in calling *le spleen Anglais*. Well, whatever nomenclature we give to the disease in question, my worthy countryman had a decided

attack of it. His features were sombre, his hair in disorder, his chin buried in a huge military stock which ascended to his ears, his coat buttoned up to the chin and ill brushed, his hands crossed behind his back à la Napoleon, his eye fixed and haggard; such was my friend Ned Donovan as he walked silently along at about ten paces from me in the most deserted alley of the park.

As I was perfectly well aware that he particularly disliked being interrupted or questioned when he was in one of his brown studies, I left him for a considerable time to his meditations, amusing myself the while by churning *sotto voce* the last opera air, but this resource becoming at length extremely tiresome, and feeling by certain premonitory symptoms that this *spleen Anglais* was beginning to gain upon me also, I essayed to arouse my comrade from his meditations, and with this end in view I said to him—

"Edward, what are you thinking of?"

"Nothing," replied he; but he added not a word to this laconical response.

"Nothing!" said I to myself. "What a glorious subject for a long-winded psychological discussion!" and I was just preparing an argument on the following thesis:—The human mind being essentially active, it is utterly impossible that it can repose for a single instant; *ergo*, no one has the right of saying *I am thinking of nothing*, when a very stylish phaeton dashed past us like lightning. We had at this moment reached the park gate opposite the Boulevard du Regent. I raised my eyes and perceived in the phaeton a lady holding the reins and a gentleman who seemed to be her father. The lady appeared to me to be pretty, but, to tell the truth, I did not pay much attention to her. Meanwhile, my companion had come to a stand-still at the park gate, and was following the course of the phaeton with his eyes.

I planted myself opposite to him, and, with the design of opening the discussion upon the aforesaid metaphysical problem, I said—

"Are you quite sure, Ned, that you were thinking of nothing?"

As he continued to watch the retreating phaeton, I repeated my question—

"Are you quite sure, Teddy, my boy, that you were thinking of nothing?"

No reply. The phaeton continued its rapid course, and Edward's eyes followed its motions. But I was determined to obtain a reply, whatever it might be, from

my taciturn companion, and I accordingly repeated for the third time my question, laying a marked emphasis on each syllable—

"Are—you—quite—sure—that—you—were—thinking—of—nothing?"

"May the devil fly away with you!" exclaimed Edward, furiously, and he strode rapidly off in the direction taken by the phaeton, which at that moment disappeared round the corner of one of the streets leading to the Boulevard.

I followed him, laughing, for I make it a rule never to lose my temper at my worthy friend's little eccentricities; a few moments afterwards we met one of his friends, who said to him eagerly—

"Well, did you see her?"

"Who?"

"She."

"No, I didn't see her."

"She has just this instant drove by in a phaeton along with her father; do not on any account miss the ball to-night, *she* will be there."

Ned replied only by a sigh, and his friend having taken his departure, we resumed our melancholy promenade.

I thought of the scene with the tailor in the morning, and I recalled to mind what Edward had then said touching this ball where he was to be introduced to a certain young lady whose better acquaintance he was anxious to cultivate.

"Now I have discovered the solution of the riddle," exclaimed I, aloud.

"Of what riddle?" demanded my companion, mechanically.

"I know what you were thinking of just now; it was not of nothing, as you pretended."

"Of what was it then? I should much like to know."

"You were thinking of three *fiascos*, if I may use the Italianism."

"This explanation is a riddle in itself," replied Edward, with a slight shrug of the shoulders.

"You were thinking of three *fiascos*," repeated I; "the fiasco of your coat, in the first instance, which led to the fiasco of the ball, and both in turn to the fiasco of the introduction to the lady in the phaeton."

Poor Ned smiled sadly.

"And hence your blue devils," added I.

"What is to be done to dissipate them?"

"I know of but one means, and that is to think no more either of the coat, the

ball, or the lady; and to come to the theatre."

"What do they play to-night?"

"What does it signify? come on, anyhow."

"Well, I never refuse doing anything you like; let's go to the theatre, with all my heart."

And ten minutes after the brief colloquy we were installed in a box on the second tier of the "Grand Theatre" of Brussels. By degrees the house filled, and soon it was quite full, as is generally the case on a Sunday night.

The piece was *Robert le Diable*, an opera, which, though an especial favourite of mine, by dint of constantly seeing and hearing, we both of us knew by heart. So little attention, indeed, did we pay to what was passing on the stage, that, at the termination of the first act, we could not for the life of us have said what the actors had been about. Poor Teddy's blue devils had not left him; and the curtain was just about to rise for the second act, when the door of our box opened, and we heard these words uttered by the most silvery voice in the world:—

"Would you be so good as to open another box for us, if you please? this is occupied."

Edward turned round; judge of his surprise and joy—the lady and gentleman of the phaeton stood before him. His confusion of mind was such that he remained dumb, and never even thought of offering them his place. The box-opener was just closing the door, when I rose, and addressing myself to the father of the young lady, "Monsieur," I exclaimed, "you can dispose of my seat; and as for the lady, I am sure my friend will be most happy to resign his chair to her." This indirect interpellation had the effect of rousing Edward from his ecstasy.

"Oh, certainly, with great pleasure!" cried he, rising and presenting his chair to the lady.

She looked at her father.

After a few mutual compliments the old gentleman accepted; and I had the supreme satisfaction of standing sentry behind the papa's chair, in order to procure my friend the pleasure of acting in the same manner behind that of the daughter.

What a beautiful invention is friendship! I return to my text; but in this particular circumstance it was by no means a comfortable invention for my legs. Never mind, it is good to know

how to act on decisive occasions, and most certainly this was a decisive moment for my friend Ned.

As there is nothing in the world which so completely paralyses the conversational powers of young people as the presence of a father attentive to every word they utter, decidedly the best thing for me to do was to *amuse* the papa; but in order to effect this neatly, it was absolutely necessary, in the first place, to discover what might be the good man's hobby.

"Let's commence by studying his physiognomy," thought I, "according to that instinctive method which is peculiar to me; this study will lead me to a knowledge of his character; I will then endeavour to enter upon the conversation accordingly, and it will be the deuce and all if after a little by-play I do not succeed in bringing out his weak point."

After this piece of logical reasoning, I commenced operations by measuring with the corner of my eye the facial outline of my neighbour, and I discovered in the first instance a very evident depression of the skull—the certain sign of a limited intellect. I observed afterwards a largely developed, but by no means aquiline nasal protuberance; two large blue eyes, without the slightest expression of pride or cunning, and as serene as a cloudless sky; a pair of lips of more than the ordinary fulness, the upper one half covering the lower, and a profusion of silky white hair. For the rest, not a wrinkle was discernible upon the forehead nor round the temples, not even the inevitable crow's-feet, the diverging lines of which our present race of fashionables—old men at thirty—endeavour to hide by the cunning arrangement of the hair; add to this a ruddiness of complexion which shamed even the lilies and roses on the cheek of his youthful neighbour, and a figure of respectable corpulence, though far removed from obesity; finally, a sky-blue coat with metal buttons, a white cravat, and small ear-rings completed our individual's portrait.

"That will do," thought I to myself; "I know him now from head to foot, both physically and morally. Physically, he is a good-looking elderly gentleman, in the full enjoyment of a very green old age, eating well, drinking well, and sleeping ditto. Morally, he is a most worthy, excellent individual, who goes to Mass regularly every Sunday morning, and to the Opera in the evening; most probably a retired merchant or tradesman, now

churchwarden of his parish; in a word, he is a good papa, and precisely the sort of man we want; and I should be in no wise surprised if his daughter led him by the nose, above all, if he be a widower, as we must hope he is."

As to the lady, I measured her at a glance. Pretty as an angel, and witty as an angel's antipodes. The discovery of this last quality—if it be a quality in a woman—rather astonished me in this particular case, as Ned was always saying that he would only marry a stupid woman, "because," as he said, after Talleyrand, "with her my wit will have repose." I thought that the young lady might possibly possess some advantages which compensated in the eyes of my friend for her defect of being witty. "However that may be," thought I, "let's tackle the papa!"

But the papa spared me the trouble, for he it was who addressed me the first word, "Whenever you wish to sit down, monsieur," said he, "I will take your place; we will occupy by turns the front of the box."

The lady made the same offer to Edward, which we, of course, politely declined. "There is still a stool vacant," said I, "but I prefer standing just at present."

"It is a species of gymnastic exercise which has its advantages," observed my neighbour, without the slightest shade of irony in the tone of his voice. "Whenever I wish to gain an appetite I go into my hot-house, and I stand there sometimes for hours together watching my camellias flowering."

"I have your hobby, O respectable old man!" thought I to myself.

"Ah! monsieur is an amateur of flowers?" said Ned.

"Papa does not hear very well with the left ear," observed the daughter.

"So much the better," inwardly ejaculated I, and without more ado I sprang at one bound into the midst of a horticultural and floricultural discussion. With the air and tone of one possessing an intimate knowledge of the subject, I canvassed the various merits and defects of cactuses, roses, dahlias, ranunculuses, carnations, tulips, azaleas, rhododendrons, anemones, &c., &c., &c.; then perceiving that my worthy neighbour began to take an interest in my conversation, like another Asmodeus I made him grasp the skirt of my mantle, while I flew with him in a sort of horticultural flight round the

world. Commencing with England, I drew a glowing picture of the marvels of Kew, Chiswick, and Chatsworth, and of the acres of glass under which flourished such wondrous products of the art botanical. From thence I carried him bodily to the Brazils, Australia, the Himalayas, and we were on our passage home, *via* the Cape, when I perceived that my friend Edward was most adventurously navigating an ocean rather more dangerous than ours.

From that moment the papa's good ear became my property in spite of the opera, the third act of which was now about to commence; and in default of *his* ear, it was mine which overheard the colloquy of the young couple, a few detached phrases of which reached me from time to time.

"Oh! how glad I am now that I was unable to go to the ball to-night, and how much happier I should be if I could hear you say as much."

I did not catch the reply, but by the impression it seemed to make upon Edward, I concluded that it was a dilatory one. I now sought to resume my botanical discussion, but it would appear in a voice rather too highly elevated for the locality, for a few *hushes* from the next box imposed silence upon me until the conclusion of the act. As the curtain rose for the next act, I caught a few more fragments of conversation:—"Do you not think I should be very foolish to listen to — whom I have never spoken —" The conclusion of this sentence was interrupted by the papa, who said to me loud enough to be heard by our two neighbours—

"I shall be most happy to see you, sir, whenever and as often as you please to visit my hothouses."

Ned frowned, but I hastened to reassure him by rejoining quickly—

"And you will permit me to bring my friend?"

"Oh, certainly; I included him in the invitation."

Ned trembled, and I fancied that his pretty neighbour shared his emotion.

"Courage—all goes well!" whispered I in the ear of my friend.

"Not so well as you imagine," replied the love-sick Irishman, suppressing a huge sigh; then he resumed his attack on the heart of his fair neighbour, and I my horticultural platitudes with the old gentleman.

You will perhaps tell me, fair reader,

that my friend Ned was wrong in seeking for an avowal, or at least a word of encouragement at the first interview. But then he was not sure of meeting with a second opportunity of speaking in private to her he loved when we should go to visit the hothouses. He then desired most vividly to learn if he had the happiness of pleasing. All lovers, for the matter of that, are afflicted with this species of curiosity.

But, as I have previously observed, the young lady knew perfectly well what she was about, although she possessed that art—so precious in a woman—of dissembling her wit under a veil of *naïve* simplicity. While conversing with her father I observed her attentively, and I was not slow to perceive that she was a woman who would lead my friend a very pretty dance of it (by prudence, it is true, rather than through coquetry) before giving in, unless I should discover some means of hastening the *dénouement* of the *Love Chase* before that of *Robert le Diable*. With this end in view, I sought within the lowest depths of my cranium for an inspiration, and this is the inspiration I found.

On the pretext of wishing to speak to a friend in the *parquet*, I left the box. About half an hour afterwards, at the moment when the princess on her knees before Robert screams "Grace! grace!" I re-entered on tip-toe, and, leaning over Edward's shoulder, I said to him with an air of mystery, administering at the same time a warning nudge on the elbow,

"You cannot guess whom I met just now; two persons whose presence here will astonish you."

This was said in English, *apparently* with the intention of concealment; but I had previously ascertained by a few words I had succeeded in overhearing, that the young lady understood the language.

"Your uncle from Dublin," I continued, "and with him your cousin, the girl, you know, they wish you to marry."

The lady, who during this brief colloquy had feigned to be deeply absorbed in the contemplation of Mademoiselle Villiomi's agony, shot at me obliquely a lynx-eyed glance; but I opposed to her fire a brow of polished brass.

Master Teddy began to comprehend my game.

"I shall not marry my cousin," replied he.

"Then your uncle's property will go from you, you know," rejoined I, loud enough to be heard.

I had said enough for the daughter, and I accordingly returned to my old gentleman, who forthwith began to unroll for my edification the interminable list of all the plants of his hothouse, without sparing me the enumeration of a single daisy; nor did he pause until the middle of the fifth act to say to his daughter, who with downcast eyes and blushing cheeks was listening to the animated conversation of my friend Ned—

"Well, my dear, how far are we got?—Are we near the *dénouement*?"

"Not yet, papa."

"This piece is very long; but I do not much mind, it amuses me. And you, my child, does it amuse you also?"

"Why—yes."

I heard Ned murmur in a low voice, "Oh, say *yes* to me also."

She shook her head almost imperceptibly.

Poor Ned cast a glance of distress at me, as if to implore my assistance. Judging that the time had arrived to make my grand push—my "Up Guards, and at them,"—I brought up my reserve for the final assault, something in this manner—

"Do you know, *mon ami*, that this little cousin of yours is a deuced pretty girl? I really cannot understand you at all. Whilst you have the opportunity, why not make your peace with the uncle? In a few hours more it will be too late; he leaves for Paris to-morrow morning, and then adieu to your pretty cousin, and her fortune also."

Ned pretended to reflect; his fair neighbour appeared to me to be on thorns. The opera was drawing to a close; I was still in full conversation with the old floricultural amateur.

"The curtain is falling, I perceive; we

will resume our conversation another day," said he, as he took up his cloak.

"I await a *yes* or a *no*," murmured poor Ned, his hands clasped, his cheeks pallid, and his eyes haggard with mingled anxiety and emotion.

"Your uncle has caught sight of us; he is making signs to you to come!" cried I, at the same instant.

This was the last shot, and it told well. Our lover rose, and cast one last supplicating glance at his obdurate fair one; she seemed, however, to have made up her mind at the supreme moment, for in a low but firm voice she replied, "Well—yes!"

Ned Donovan, transported with joy, seized the little hand that was abandoned to him, and imprinted on it an ardent kiss.

The papa saw nothing, nor did I after this, we were too busily engaged in going through the formalities of leave-taking.

* * * * *

Ned Donovan accompanied me to the door of my lodging, and as he bid me good-night, the poor fellow in the excess of his joy and gratitude, fairly hugged me.

"This is what I call acting as a true friend!" exclaimed he; "I owe to you my present and future happiness."

"Well," thought I to myself as I prepared to retire to roost, "so ends a day which has scarcely been an amusing one for me, though it has apparently terminated happily for my worthy friend Ned." And with these reflections I laid my head on the pillow and slept the sleep of the just until ten o'clock the following morning.

May thy slumbers, gentle reader, be as light, and dreams as pleasant."

ANNIE LIVINGSTONE.

Not far from the straggling village of Nethan Foot, in Clydesdale, stood, many years ago, a small cottage inhabited by a widow and her two daughters. Their poverty and misfortunes secured for them a certain degree of interest among their neighbours; but the peculiarities of the widow prevented much intercourse between the family and the inhabitants of the district.

In her youth "daft Jeanie," as she was called in the village, had been the belle of Nethan Foot; but by her coquetry and love of admiration, she had excited great jealousy among the girls of the country side; and her success in securing the handsomest lad in the place as her husband had not tended to increase her popularity. Those days, however, had long passed away. A terrible calamity had befallen her; and one single night had deprived her at once of home and husband. A sudden flood, or "speat," of the river had inundated their cottage; and in their endeavours to save the wreck of their furniture from destruction, her husband had lost his life, and her eldest daughter received such injuries as to leave her a helpless cripple for the rest of her days.

Jeanie, never very strong-minded, broke down completely under these accumulated misfortunes; and though her bodily health was restored after the fever which followed, she rose up from her sick-bed an idiot, or rather what is called in Scotland "daft"—that peculiar state of mind between idiocy and mania.

The charity of a neighbouring proprietor gave her a cottage rent free, the Nethan Foot people gave her what help they could in furnishing it, but they were themselves too poor to do more, so that the whole support of her helpless mother and sister devolved on Annie Livingstone, the younger daughter, a handsome girl of fifteen years of age.

It is only by living among the peasantry of Scotland that we learn fully to appreciate the warm heart and heroic self-sacrifices which are often concealed under their calm exterior and apparent coldness of manner; and no one unacquainted with her previous history could have guessed that Annie Livingstone, the blithest hay-maker, the best reaper, the hardest worker in the field or house, the most smiling, cheerful, and best-conducted girl in the

valley of the Nethan, had home sorrows which fall to the lot of few in this world. Day after day she had to leave her bed-ridden sister alone and untended to seek a scanty means of subsistence for the family in out-of-doors labour; while more than half of her hours of rest and refreshment were occupied in running down to the cottage, to see that Marian required nothing, that her mother had remembered to make the porridge, or having done so, had given Marian her share instead of devouring it all herself. But a want of care of her helpless daughter was not the only thing Annie had to dread from "daft Jeanie." The peculiar temper and disposition of her girlhood subsisted still, and no longer kept in check by intellect, displayed themselves in a thousand vagaries, which rendered her the laughing-stock of the village, and caused bitter mortification to her daughters. Once or twice Annie had ventured to interfere with her mother's modes of proceeding; but instead of doing good by her endeavours, she not only brought upon herself reproaches, curses, even blows, but by exciting the revengeful cunning of madness, occasioned the perpetration of malicious tricks, which greatly added to her previous annoyances.

It was wonderful that in such circumstances the young girl contrived to keep her temper and good spirits; but she was well-principled and strong-minded, and, as she sometimes said when the neighbours pitied her for what she had to bear—"Eh, woman! but the back is made for the burden; and He that has seen fit to gie me heavy trials has gi'en me also a stout heart and braid shoulthers to bear them. And better than all, He has given me my ain dear Mair'n to be a help and comfort to me in all my difficulties."

"A help, lassie? A hindrance you mean."

"No, woman; a help. Gude kens my spirit would fail me out and out if I had na Mair'n to keep me up—to read to me out of the Lord's book—for you ken I am no a great scollard mysel'—and to learn me bonnie psalms and hymns to sing when I am dowie" (disheartened).

The picture displayed by these simple words was a touching one; but much more touching was the reality of Annie's devotion to Marian. When her day's labour was over, she hurried back to her poverty-

stricken home; and having swept out and dusted the kitchen, and set on the kettle for tea—an indulgence which she laboured hard to afford the invalid—she would creep up the ladder-like stair to the loft, which was her sister's sleeping chamber, and, wrapping her in an old shawl, would carry her carefully downstairs, place her in her own peculiar chair, and wait upon her with the tenderness of a sister and the watchfulness of a slave.

When tea was over, the open Bible was laid on the table; a splinter of the clear cannel coal of the country, which the very poor of the district frequently use instead of candles, was set on the upper bar of the grate; and by its flickering light the two sisters would spend the evening together, the younger employed in darning and patching their well-worn garments, the elder in reading to her from the holy volume. Meanwhile "daft Jeanie" would wander in and out, backwards and forwards, sometimes amusing herself with playing spiteful tricks on Annie—to whom as years went by she seemed to take a strange antipathy—sometimes sitting cowered up on the hearth, maundering and moaning, and, in spite of their efforts to the contrary, producing the most depressing effect upon her daughters' spirits. At such times it was useless to try to induce her to go to bed; her natural perversity seemed to find pleasure in refusing to do so, till Annie, worn out by her hard day's work, was ready to fall asleep in her chair, and was yet unable to go to bed till she had seen her mother safely in hers.

In spite of these disadvantages, however, Annie grew up a handsome, cheerful girl, respected by all who knew her, and dearly loved by those who were intimate with her. But she had very few intimates. She had no leisure to waste in idle gossip; she could not spend an evening hour in rambling by the sparkling Nethan water, or by the banks of the stately Clyde; no one ever found her loitering in the hay-field after the sun went down; no one ever met her at a kirk (harvest-home) or other rural gaiety; and even on "Saturday at e'en" she would hurry home to Marian rather than join the group of merry lads and lassies gathered round the village well. Marian was her one engrossing thought—to be with her, her greatest happiness; and no holiday pleasure could in her eyes equal the delight she felt when, on a summer Sabbath afternoon, she carried her helpless charge in her arms to the top of Dykiebutt's

field, and let her look at the trees, the skies, and the rushing water, listen to the song of the lark as it fluttered in the blue ether above them, or to the mavis singing in the old apple-tree that hung its branches so temptingly over the orchard wall.

But a time came when what had hitherto been Annie's greatest pleasure was put in competition with one far greater; when the heart that had lavished so much affection on her crippled sister, and had stood steady in filial duty to a selfish and lunatic mother, was subjected to a trying ordeal.

One eventful year, when an early spring and intensely hot summer had caused the corn-fields of Blinkbonnie to ripen with such unheard-of rapidity, that the Irish reapers had not yet made their appearance in the neighbourhood, it was announced throughout the vale of the Nethan, that if every man, woman, and child in the district did not aid in getting in the harvest, half the crop would be lost. Now, as David Caldwell, the tenant of Blinkbonnie farm, was a great favourite in the neighbourhood, everybody who could handle a sickle responded to his appeal, and made quite a "ploy" (fête) of going to shear at Blinkbonnie. Marian Livingstone had been so great a sufferer that season, that Annie had given up farm-labour for "sewing-work," as she called embroidery, that she might be more at home with her sister, and secure a larger income; but sedentary employments were so repugnant to her naturally active habits, that she rejoiced at the necessity which forced her to join the reapers, for David Caldwell himself had asked her to come, and he and his family had been too steadily kind to Marian for her to refuse such a request, even had she wished it. But she did not wish it, and she was among the first of the reapers who appeared at the farm.

Blinkbonnie was, as its name suggests, a very pretty place. Situated on the slope of a gentle hill that faced the south, it was the earliest farm in that part of Clydesdale; and as the winding river bathed the foot of the hill, and the woods of Craignethan clothed the opposite bank, it was also a favourite resort of the young people of the neighbourhood, who found a drink of May Caldwell's buttermilk, or a bite of her peasemeal scones, a very pleasant conclusion to their evening strolls. In short, Blinkbonnie was as popular a place as the Caldwells were popular people, and every-

body did their utmost to get in the corn quickly. As we have said, Annie Livingstone was a good hand at the "heuk," or sickle; it was, therefore, natural that the best "bandster," or binder of sheaves, should be selected for the part of the field where she was; and much rural mirth and wit were shown in the endeavours of two very different people to secure this honourable title, and its attendant position. They were Alick Caldwell, the farmer's brother, a journeyman carpenter of Nethan Foot, and Jamie Ross, the blacksmith, who had been friendly rivals all their lives, and were so in the present instance; but Annie was by general vote chosen umpire between them, and she gave judgment in Alick's favour.

In those days the Clydesdale lasses wore the old Scottish peasant dress of the short gown and petticoat, one which is, we fear, almost exploded, but which was as becoming as it was convenient. In it many a girl, who would have looked commonplace in modern costume, appeared piquant, if not pretty; and to Annie Livingstone it was peculiarly suited. Her broad but sloping shoulders, and her rounded waist, showed to great advantage in the close-fitting short-gown, whose clear pink colour, contrasting with the deep blue of the linsey-woolsey petticoat, gave a look of freshness and cleanliness to her whole appearance, which was enhanced by the spotless purity of her neckerchief, and the snowy whiteness of her throat. In short, with her well-knit figure, her rosy cheeks, her smoothly snooded hair, her dark eyes, and her "wee bit mouth sae sweet and bonnie," Annie was altogether a very comely lassie; and when she blushed and looked down, as Alick thanked her for the judgment given in his favour, he thought her so very pretty, that he was strongly tempted to catch her in his arms and give her a hearty kiss—a mode of expressing admiration at which many girls in their primitive district might have been more flattered than annoyed; but there was something in Annie Livingstone's whole manner and conduct which made it impossible to take such a liberty with her.

Nevertheless, when the reapers returned home that night, Alick refused his brother's invitation to remain at Blink-bonnie; and he not only contrived to keep near Annie all the way home, but was waiting for her next morning at the end of Dykiebutt's field to escort her to the farm, and made himself agreeable to her on the way thither by promising to show

where she could find some wild flower roots, which Marian had long wished to have transplanted to their little garden.

"It is a pity, Annie, that you don't turn this kail-yard of yours to better account," Alick said that evening, when, on the plea of carrying the roots for her, he accompanied her down to the cottage; "it would grow potatoes and turnips as well as kail, and that would make a pleasant change for Marian."

Annie blushed.

"Maybe so," she said, ingenuously, "but I have nae time for garden-work. I wish whiles that I had, for Mair'n is terrible fond of flowers."

The hint so unintentionally given was seized with avidity; and from that time forward many of Alick's leisure hours were devoted to Annie's garden, and not a Sunday passed over without a visit from him to "daft Jeanie's" cottage to bring a nosegay for Marian. Such consideration affected Annie very much; but Alick's weekly visits after a time gave her almost as much pain as pleasure. It was delightful, certainly, to see how happy they made Marian; and to herself, personally, they were in every way gratifying; she did so like to hear her sister and Alick talk together, to listen to their remarks on the books they had read, and the thoughts they had thought; and to feel that, unlearned as she was, she could appreciate the intellectual gifts which both possessed, and which they had the power of giving forth so well; but she soon found that to her mother Alick's presence was very distasteful. So long as he was there, she kept tolerably quiet—a stranger's presence generally has a certain control over persons afflicted as she was; but the moment he quitted the house, she indemnified herself for her enforced good behaviour by increased restlessness and ill-temper; she abused Alick in no measured terms, ill-treated Annie worse than ever, and made Marian suffer in consequence.

And yet it was impossible to put an end to Alick's visits. If Annie told him not to come to the cottage, he said, with a smile, "that he would not, if she forbade him, come ben the house; but he could not leave the garden uncared for, nor could he do without seeing her and Mair'n on Sabbaths in Dykiebutt's field. Mair'n would miss him if he did not come to see her, and bring her nosegay, and carry her down to the waterside, or to the bonnie firwood on the Lanark road; it was so dull for her, poor body, to spend ilka

Sabbath in Dykiebutt's field. Besides, Mair'n liked him to come, whatever Annie did."

Poor Annie's heart beat fast.

"Oh, Alick!" she began; but suddenly recollecting herself, she stopped abruptly, and no persuasions could induce her to finish her sentence.

She felt intuitively that it was not only to talk to Marian that Alick came so often. She was conscious that it was not Marian's eyes he sought when he spoke those beautiful words which caused her heart to glow, and which seemed to shed on earth, and tree, and sky, a glory they had never known till now. But she felt, also, that this ought not to be, that in her peculiar situation she was not entitled to encourage such attentions; and yet—and yet, alas! she could not be so unwomanly as to tell him plainly that she understood why he lavished so much kindness and time on her sister. No, she had nothing for it but to let things take their course, and strive to guard her own heart against him. She no longer, therefore, interdicted his visits, but she took every opportunity that offered to leave him alone with Marian, and steal out, meanwhile, to the most sequestered spots near at hand, where she might commune with her own heart, and seek from Heaven the strength necessary to sacrifice her own hopes of happiness to the claims of duty, and the comfort of her helpless charges.

Thus time stole on, till one evening, on one of these lonely strolls, she chanced to meet some of her acquaintance walking along the road in the Cragneithan direction. They greeted her heartily, and asked whether she would come with them to the preaching.

"The preaching!" she said. "What preaching?"

"Eh, lassie, did you no' hear that Mr. Cameron, of Cambus, is to preach the night in the Campfield? He is a real grand preacher. You had best come."

Now this invitation was very tempting to Annie, for she could not afford time to go more than once a fortnight to church at Lanark, seven miles distant, and she liked nothing better than "a grand preacher;" while enough of the old imaginative Cameronian temperament remained in her to make an open-air service more agreeable in her eyes than that in a church.

"You see, Annie," her friends continued, "the day's preaching is a kind of trial, just to see if the folk care for good

doctrine; and if they come, we hear tell that Mr. Cameron will preach there ilk other Sabbath. Sae, come awa, like a good lassie. Marian can weel spare you for a time.

"Maybe she can spare me the day," Annie answered, "for Alick is down by yonder the now, sae she will no' be weary-in' for want of me. Just bide a minute till I see."

And away she flew to make the proposal to Marian. She gave her unqualified approbation to Annie's going; but a shadow passed over Alick's face, even while he volunteered a promise to remain with Marian during her sister's absence, and added with a laugh, which somehow had little mirth in it, that he had just been telling Marian that he thought he must set on the kettle himself the night if he was to get his tea with them, for Annie seemed to have forgotten them altogether.

"Oh, no, I'll sort the kettle," Annie said, nervously; and she lifted it from the crook, and proceeded to fill it with water at the well; but Alick took it from her, saying at the same time, that "it would set her better if she gaed to her ain room, and made herself praw for the preaching."

The touch of bitterness in his tone as he said this brought the tears to Annie's eyes. He little guessed how willingly she would have given up the preaching, anything, to spend an hour in his company, if *it had been right*; but she felt that it was not so for either of their sakes; so she brushed away her tears, smoothed her glossy hair, put a silk handkerchief he had given her round her neck; and having seen that Marian had everything she required, and that her mother was quietly asleep in her chair, she hurried to join her friends.

It was a lovely September evening. The leaves were bright with the tints of early autumn; the apple-trees, for which Clydesdale is famous, laden with golden fruit, hung temptingly over the orchard walls; and the high road, passing through a gently undulating country, abounded in charming peeps of the ever-flowing Clyde, whose varied banks, sometimes rich in wood, sometimes hemmed in by massive rocks, and sometimes skirted by gently-sloping and extensive meadows, comprise some of the fairest river scenery in Scotland. Annie, however, walked forward with a heavy heart. What was it to her that the sky was bright, and the sun brilliant? that the soft fleecy clouds piled

themselves up in fantastic forms round the horizon, and that all nature seemed happy and joyous? There was an oppression on her spirits she could not shake off—a feeling that some crisis of her fate was at hand which she had no power to avert, but whose consequences would take the life from her heart, the glory from her sun and sky. Alick had spoken to her as he had never done before, as if he thought that others might have more influence over her than he had, as if she could care for any one thing or person in comparison with him; and when she tried to fix her thoughts on the place to which she was going, and for what purpose, Alick's voice rang in her ear, Alick's sad, disappointed look haunted her memory; and she reached her destination long before she had regained her composure.

The Campfield was a small holme, washed by the Nethan Water, which, making a sudden whirl at that point, surrounded it on three sides, while the fourth was bounded by a wooded hill, which separated it from the ruined Castle of Craignethan. It was a tradition in the country that the spot had been a camp of the Covenanters in the days of Claverhouse, and that a band of the Royalists had been defeated there before the great battle of Bothwell Brigg. The people of the district still point out the path by which the Covenanters gained the hill that commanded Craignethan Castle; and allege that, for a time at least, the Royalist fortress was in their hands. At all events, the place is so connected in their minds with the days of the Covenant, that it is a favourite site for a field preaching; and nothing can be more picturesque than the scene it presents under such an aspect. The steep hill-side, the murmuring water, the soft thymy turf, the crowd of listeners, in every attitude of earnest attention, hanging on the eloquent words of the preacher, take one back to the old times, when, in caves, and dells, and bleak moor-sides, the stern men of the Solemn League and Covenant listened to the truth at the risk of their own lives, and those of their nearest and dearest. Just such a preacher as might have led these warlike and determined men was Mr. Cameron, of Cambus. He was old in years, with silver hair and wrinkled brow; but he had a clear penetrating eye, and that look of power, mingled with gentleness, that uncompromising love of right and truth, which strike conviction to every heart, and rouse men's souls to do or die.

At any other time Annie Livingstone would have listened to the preacher with a kindling eye and a glowing cheek, but to-day she sat there, pale and cold, struggling to quell the tempter that whispered to her to forsake her natural duties for the love of one who was becoming dearer to her than all the world besides. She fixed her eyes on the minister, she endeavoured to follow his words, but the prayer fell unheeded on her ear; and when the full swell of the psalm, preceding the sermon, rose into the air, her voice, generally the clearest and sweetest of the congregation, quivered and was silent. But the music was not wholly without influence on her tortured heart; and when they resumed their places to give ear to the sermon, her spirit felt more attuned to the duties of the hour.

The text given out was this:—"No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." Annie started as the words were uttered; and as she listened to the doctrines which Mr. Cameron deduced from them, she felt as if he must have known her inmost thoughts, so forcibly did he warn his hearers of the sin of forsaking the true and narrow path of duty to follow the devices of their own hearts, so powerfully did he press upon them the necessity of sacrificing all that was most dear to them, if it even threatened to interfere with the appointed course of life which God had traced out for them. Annie's heart beat painfully, for she knew too well that he spoke the truth. She felt that if she became Alick Caldwell's wife she could not then perform, as now she did, those filial and sisterly offices which had been hers from childhood, and which it would be mean and criminal to forsake. When she rose to receive the old minister's blessing, she vowed, with a sad heart, but a steadfast spirit, that, come what would, she would abide by her duty. Poor girl! she little thought how near and severe a test was awaiting her.

"Annie," said a voice at her ear, as she turned to leave the Campfield; "did you no' ken I was so near you?"

Alick need not have asked the question; for the sudden flush of the cheek, and the quick bright sparkle of the eye, were enough to show her previous ignorance.

"Marian bade me follow you, lassie. She said she did not like the look of the sky, and would feel mair at ease if I convoyed you home."

"Hout," said Annie hastily; "what

makes Mair'n sae timoursome? The sky is blue and bright, and even if it should be wet, what does a drop of rain signify?"

"I thought you would have liked me to come, Annie," was Alick's simple answer.

Annie turned away her head to conceal how much his sorrowful tone affected her.

"Ay, so I do," she said with, assumed cheerfulness; "but I dinna like Marian being left alone, so we had best walk fast hame;" and she quickened her pace. As they did-so, a distant muttering of thunder was heard, and Annie added, "Marian was right, after all. It is wonderful how she guesses some things, Alick. She is like the birds and the beasts that get restless and uncomfortable before a storm, although there is not a sign of it in the heavens bigger than a man's hand."

"That ane is bigger," Alick said, pointing to a mass of threatening cloud which was rapidly covering the sky; "and if you would my advice, Annie, you would gang with me to Blinkbonnie, and bide there till the storm is past."

"No, no," she said, nervously; "I maun gang hame to Marian and my mother, poor body."

Alick remonstrated no further, but silently followed her; as she flew rather than ran in the direction of Nethan Foot. It was growing very dark, and the rest of the congregation, having no such call as Annie's to hurry homeward, had already taken shelter in the cottages near Campfield, advising her, as they did so, to follow their example.

"I cannot," she said; "I must get hame, 'deed must I;" and striking off from the high-road, she hurried along the by-path by the Nethan Water. The evening grew darker and darker; it seemed as if the twilight had been forgotten, and the bright day had suddenly been merged in night. The thunder became every moment louder, and the lightning flashed through the trees with fearful brilliancy. The river roared along its banks; and as they approached the spot of the Nethan's confluence with the Clyde, even Annie's brave spirit trembled. She wondered whether they could cross the stepping-stones in such a flood, and in such darkness. But she had a strong will; she knew the stones to trust as well by night as by day; and besides, the storm had so lately begun, that the Nethan, she thought, could not have risen very much. So she

hurried forward still faster, and her foot was already on the overhanging bank, when Alick drew her forcibly back.

"Are you mad, Annie," he cried, "to try the stepping-stones in such a speat?" (flood), And he threw his strong arms round her.

"Let me go, Alick! I must get hame to Mair'n," she said, struggling to get free; and she might have succeeded in doing so, for she was nearly his equal in physical strength, had not a vivid flash lighted up the scene at the moment, and shown her the peril which awaited her. The generally calm Nethan Water was seething like a cauldron, and careering down to the Clyde with uncontrollable force. As if a thick curtain had been withdrawn by the flash, she saw sticks and stones whirled past her by the raging and boiling waters. She saw the banks giving way before her eyes, and the trees that grew on them nodding to their fall. It was a glorious but terrific picture, as the whole bend of the river illumined by that fearful light shone out for one single instant, then disappeared in the darkness. But short as that glance had been, it had shown her that had not Alick pulled her back she must have been engulfed in the waters, and no mortal power could have brought her to shore alive. The imminence of the danger from which she had been saved overcame her with a sudden weakness; she trembled, her struggles ceased, her head drooped on Alick's shoulder, and she burst into tears.

"Annie," he said, soothingly, "dinna greet, for you see I couldna let you drown yoursel' afore my een and no' try to save you;" and the stalwart arms that had lately so sturdily opposed her will, now folded her in a close embrace.

"Oh, Alick," she replied, with her usual simple truthfulness, "it's no' that gars me greet, but the thought that my wilfulness might hae cost your life as well as my ain."

He stooped down and pressed a first kiss on the brow that still rested on his shoulder.

"Annie, my own Annie!" he whispered, "what would life be to me wantin' you?"

"Dinna say that, Alick," she said, hurriedly, and rousing herself from the momentary yielding to her softer feelings; this is neither a time nor a place to think of such things. I maun gang hame to Mair'n."

It was impossible for Annie after that

Sabbath adventure to conceal either from herself or Alick that they loved each other dearly; but no persuasions could induce her to consent to be his wife. In vain he represented that he should consider Marian's presence in his household as a blessing, and that he had been so long accustomed to her mother's ways that he should find no difficulty in accommodating himself to them. "It was true that Mrs. Livingstone was a little afraid of him, but that was so much the better, as it evidently kept her in check."

Annie shook her head.

"She knew better what her mother really was, and to what she would expose them both; and she loved Alick too dearly to inflict such anxiety and annoyance upon him."

"Then could she not remain in her present home and have a lassie to wait on her?" Alick asked. He was well to do in the world; he could easily afford the expense, and that would make all straight.

But Annie was firm in resisting every temptation. On that same night when Alick had saved her life, she had knelt down by Marian's bed, and in her presence had vowed a vow to the Lord, that nothing should ever persuade her to yield to him in this matter. And she would not, she could not, be forsworn.

"Well, well, Annie," Alick said, with a faint smile, "a wilful wife maun ha'e her way. He that will to Couper maun to Couper; but if Annie Livingstone is no' to be my wife, de'il tak' me if any other shall have me." And he marched out of the cottage.

The tears sprung to Annie's eyes—they came there very often now—but she wiped them away, and said—

"Ay, ay, he thinks so the now; but men canna wait as women do, hoping and hoping when the heart is sick and the spirit faint. He will marry some day, and if it be for his happiness, I will be thankful."

Still it was very hard for her to be thankful, when, year by year, she saw him courted by the bonniest lasses of Clydesdale, or learned that Alick Caldwell had been the blithest singer at the Hogmenay (last night of the year) ball at Blinkbonnie, or that every one suspected that the fine valentine Ellen Lauder got on St. Valentine's day came from "bonnie Alick." At length the report of his engagement to Ellen became so prevalent, that even Marian believed it; and one fine day, when returning from Lanark,

where she had been to carry home her "sewing work," Annie herself met Alick and Ellen walking together in the firwood. A pang went through her heart at this confirmation of all she had heard, and she was startled to find from it how little belief she had hitherto had in the truth of the story. Yet it was only natural and right that it should be true. It was now three years since she had refused Alick, and very few men would have waited for her so long.

Thus thinking, she was a little surprised to see him come to the cottage as usual, and bring with him Marian's nosegay, and some numbers of a periodical, with which he had supplied her regularly since its commencement. But though he had not forgotten to be kind to Marian, Annie fancied that he looked less cheerful than he generally did; and, with the view of putting him at ease, she took courage to congratulate him on his marriage to Ellen, and to wish him every happiness.

He got up, and advancing straight to the place where she stood, he took her two hands in his, and said, seriously—

"Annie, do you mean what you say? Do you really believe that I love, or, rather, that I mean to marry Ellen, while you are still Annie Livingstone?"

The colour came and went in Annie's cheek, and her eyes fell under his steady glance, but she answered faintly—

"I did mean it, Alick; and I think you would only do what is right and prudent if you married her."

"And you, Marian," he said, turning to the poor cripple. "What do you think?"

"That a man is the better of a wife," she said, quietly; "and that as you will never get Annie, you might just as well tak' Ellen."

Alick looked distressed, and muttered—

"For if ye forsake me, Marian,
I'll e'en tak' up wi' Jean."

That is what the auld sang of the Ewe-buchts says. I ken that," he added; "but it is not my doctrine, Marian. I consider marriage in a higher and holier light; and if Annie refuses me, I must e'en rest as I am. So now you have my thoughts on the matter, and you must never again insult me by believing the nonsense of the Nethan Foot chatterers."

And thus things went on month after month, and year after year; and the only comfort poor Annie had in her life of trial was the conviction that she was doing her

duty. As age advanced on daft Jeanie, she became more unmanageable, and all the exertions her daughter could make were scarcely sufficient to keep her eccentricities within bounds, and to support her and Marian. But Annie contrived it somehow; and not even Alick guessed the bitter struggles, the personal sacrifices, the weariness and the starvation she endured to keep her poor mother from the parish, and to provide for Marian the little luxuries which in her position were actual necessities.

The end, however, came at length, and when it was least expected. "Daft Jeanie" took a fever and died, and Annie's toils were comparatively light thenceforward; but in one particular it seemed as if the release had come too late, for Alick, weary of waiting as many years as Jacob served for Leah, had quitted Nethan-Foot a few months previously. Some said he had gone to Edinburgh, some said to London, but at all events he had disappeared entirely from the neighbourhood; and in those days of heavy postage, so little intercourse was kept up between distant friends, that even his brother at Blinkbonnie only wrote to him at long intervals. Thus it happened that nearly a whole year elapsed ere Alick learned "that daft Jeanie was gone at last, and a' the folk thought poor Annie had a good riddance of her; but nevertheless she looked mair ill and pale than she had ever done before."

The news caused Alick to hurry back to Nethan Foot, and one beautiful spring afternoon he reached the home of his childhood. He had walked from Lanark, and somewhat overcome by heat and fatigue, he paused under the shadow of the firwood to collect his thoughts ere he re-entered Annie's cottage. He looked down on the Clyde and its rolling waters, on the green grass fields, on the apple orchards, white with blossom; and as he recalled the many trifling incidents which connected Annie with these familiar objects, he pictured how she would greet him now. Would not her eyes light up, as they used to do long ago, when he chanced to come on her suddenly? her cheeks brighten, and her lips smile upon him? and would she not speak to him as she had spoken on that eventful night, in that sweet, touching, tearful voice that

still rung in his ear? The very thought of it made his heart bound within his breast, and caused him to quicken his pace as he took the path leading to the cottage. To his surprise he found several groups of people gathered round the door, and there was something in their strange way of looking at him, as he advanced, that sent a chill through his veins he scarce knew why.

"How is Annie?" he asked abruptly of an acquaintance who stood in the doorway.

"Gang in yoursel' and see," was the enigmatical answer; "her troubles are past, to my thinkin'."

What did the man mean? Alick had not the courage to ask the question in words; but on entering the kitchen he turned white and faint, as the mourning groups standing round seemed to give a dreadful confirmation to his fears.

"Annie, Annie!" he exclaimed, as he darted forwards towards the inner room. "I maun see my Annie ance again."

He rudely thrust aside those who strove to prevent his entrance into the chamber where the corpse lay.

"She's there, Alick," they whispered; "but you mauna gang in—you mauna gang in."

Alick made no answer, but pushed open the half-closed door. On the rough kitchen table stood the open coffin; men and women were gathered around it; and the expression of deep grief that clouded their faces destroyed the last glimmer of hope that lingered in his breast, and for an instant he stood powerless. But the noise he had made on entering had caused the mourners to turn towards the door; and one of them, with a shrill cry, sprang towards him, and flung herself into his arms.

"Alick, dear Alick, are you come at last? *She* said you would come, and that none but Alick Caldwell should lay Marian Livingstone's head in the grave. And you *are* come! His name be praised!"

That night Annie Livingstone spent alone in her desolate cottage; but a little time afterwards she quitted Nethan Foot as Alick Caldwell's wife; and her after-life gave proof that a good sister and dutiful daughter are sure to make a good wife and a good mother.

REMINISCENCES OF EDGAR POE.

SOME sixteen years ago, I went on a little excursion with two others—one a reviewer, since dead, and the other a person who wrote laudatory notices of books, and borrowed money or favours from their flattered authors afterwards. He was called unscrupulous by some, but he probably considered his method a delicate way of conferring a favour upon an author or of doing him justice without the disagreeable conditions of bargain and sale. It is certain that he lived better and held his head higher than many who did more and better work. The reviewer petted him, and relied upon him, and gave him money when he failed to get it elsewhere.

We made one excursion to Fordham to see Poe. We found him, and his wife, and his wife's mother—who was his aunt—living in a little cottage at the top of a hill. There was an acre or two of green-sward, fenced in about the house, as smooth as velvet and as clean as the best kept carpet. There were some grand old cherry-trees in the yard, that threw a massive shade around them. The house had three rooms—a kitchen, a sitting-room, and a bed-chamber over the sitting-room. There was a piazza in front of the house that was a lovely place to sit in in summer, with the shade of cherry-trees before it. There was no cultivation, no flowers—nothing but the smooth green-sward and the majestic trees. On the occasion of this my first visit to the poet, I was a good deal plagued—Poe had somehow caught a full-grown bob-o'-link. He had put him in a cage, which he had hung on a nail driven into the trunk of a cherry-tree. The poor bird was as unfit to live in a cage as his captor was to live in the world. He was as restless as his jailer, and sprang continually in a fierce, frightened way, from one side of the cage to the other. I pitied him, but Poe was bent on taming him. There he stood, with his arms crossed before the tormented bird, his sublime trust in attaining the impossible apparent in his whole self. So handsome, so impassive in his wonderful, intellectual beauty, so proud and reserved, and yet so confidentially communicative, so entirely a gentleman on all occasions that I ever saw him—so tasteful, so good a talker was Poe, that he impressed himself and his wishes, even without words, upon those with whom he spoke. How-

ever, I remonstrated against the imprisonment of "Robert of Lincoln Green."

"You are wrong," said he, quietly, "in wishing me to free the bird. He is a splendid songster, and as soon as he is tamed he will delight our home with his musical gifts. You should hear him ring out like a chime of joy bells his wonderful song."

Poe's voice was melody itself. He always spoke low, even in a violent discussion, compelling his hearers to listen if they would know his opinion, his facts, fancies, or philosophy, or his weird imaginings. These last usually flowed from his pen, seldom from his tongue.

On this occasion I was introduced to the young wife of the poet, and to the mother, then more than sixty years of age. She was a tall, dignified old lady, with a most ladylike manner, and her black dress, though old and much worn, looked really elegant on her. She wore a widow's cap of the genuine pattern, and it suited exquisitely with her snow-white hair. Her features were large, and corresponded with her stature, and it seemed strange how such a stalwart and queenly woman could be the mother of her almost petite daughter. Mrs. Poe looked very young; she had large black eyes, and a pearly whiteness of complexion, which was a perfect pallor. Her pale face, her brilliant eyes, and her raven hair gave her an unearthly look. One felt that she was almost a disrobed spirit, and when she coughed it was made certain that she was rapidly passing away.

The mother seemed hale and strong, and appeared to be a sort of universal Providence for her strange children.

The cottage had an air of taste and gentility that must have been lent to it by the presence of its inmates. So neat, so poor, so unfurnished, and yet so charming a dwelling I never saw. The floor of the kitchen was white as wheaten flour. A table, a chair, and a little stove that it contained, seemed to furnish it perfectly. The sitting-room floor was laid with check matting; four chairs, a light stand, and a hanging bookshelf completed its furniture. There were pretty presentation copies of books on the little shelves, and the Brownings had posts of honour on the stand. With quiet exultation Poe drew from his side pocket a letter that he had recently received from Elizabeth

Barrett Browning. He read it to us. It was very flattering. She told Poe that his "poem of the Raven had awakened a fit of horror in England." This was what he loved to do. To make the flesh creep, to make one shudder and freeze with horror, was more to his relish (I cannot say more to his mind or heart) than to touch the tenderest chords of sympathy or sadness.

On the book-shelf there lay a volume of Poe's poems. He took it down, wrote my name in it, and gave it to me. I think he did this from a feeling of sympathy, for I could not be of advantage to him, as my two companions could. I had sent him an article when he edited the *Broadway Journal*, which had pleased him. It was a sort of wonder article, and he published it without knowing the authorship, and he was pleased to find his anonymous contributor in me. He was at this time greatly depressed. Their extreme poverty, the sickness of his wife, and his own inability to write, sufficiently accounted for this. We spent half an hour in the house, when some more company came, which included ladies, and then we all went to walk.

We strolled away into the woods, and had a very cheerful time, till some one proposed a game at leaping. I think it must have been Poe, as he was expert in the exercise. Two or three gentlemen agreed to leap with him, and though one of them was tall, and had been a hunter in times past, Poe still distanced them all. But alas! his gaiters, long worn and carefully kept, were both burst in the grand leap that made him victor. I had pitied the poor bob-o'-link in his hard and hopeless imprisonment, but I pitied Poe more now. I was certain he had no other shoes, boots, or gaiters. Who amongst us could offer him money to buy a new pair? Surely not the writer of this, for the few shillings that I paid to go to Fordham must be economized somewhere and somehow, amongst my indispensable disbursements. I should have to wear fewer clean shirts, or eat a less number of oyster stews. In those days I never aspired to a broil. It is well that habit is a grand ameliorator, and that we come to like what we are obliged to get accustomed to. But if any one had money, who had the effrontery to offer it to the poet? When we reached the cottage, I think all felt that we must not go in, to see the shoeless unfortunate sitting or standing in our midst. I had

an errand, however—I had left the volume of Poe's poems—and I entered the house to get it. The poor old mother looked at his feet, with a dismay that I shall never forget.

"Oh, Eddie!" said she, "how did you burst your gaiters?"

Poe seemed to have come into a semi-torpid state as soon as he saw his mother.

"Do answer Muddie, now," said she, coaxingly.

"Muddie" was her pet name with her children.

I related the cause of the mishap, and she drew me into the kitchen.

"Will you speak to Mr. —," said she, "about Eddie's last poem?"

Mr. — was the reviewer.

"If he will only take the poem, Eddie can have a pair of shoes. He has it—I carried it last week, and Eddie says it is his best. You will speak to him about it, won't you?"

We had already read the poem in conclave, and Heaven forgive us, we could not make head or tail to it. It might as well have been in any of the lost languages, for any meaning we could extract from its melodious numbers. I remember saying that I believed it was only a hoax that Poe was passing off for poetry, to see how far his name would go in imposing upon people. But here was a situation. The reviewer had been actively instrumental in the demolition of the gaiters.

"Of course they will publish the poem," said I, "and I will ask C—— to be quick about it."

The poem was paid for at once, and published soon after. I presume it is regarded as genuine poetry in the collected poems of its author, but then it bought the poet a pair of gaiters, and twelve shillings over.

At my next visit, Poe grew very confidential with me.

"I write," said he, "from a mental necessity—to satisfy my taste and my love of art. Fame forms no motive power with me. What can I care for the judgment of a multitude, every individual of which I despise?"

"But, Mr. Poe," said I, "there are individuals whose judgment you respect."

"Certainly, and I would choose to have their esteem unmixed with the mean adulation of the mob."

"But the multitude may be honestly and legitimately pleased," said I.

"That may be possible," said Poe,

musingly, "because they *may* have an honest and legitimate leader, and not a poor man who has been paid a hundred dollars to manufacture opinions for them and fame for an author."

"Do reviewers sell their literary conscience thus unconscionably?" said I.

"A literary critic must be loth to violate his taste, his sense of the fit and the beautiful. To sin against these, and praise an unworthy author, is to him an unpardonable sin. But if he were placed on the rack, or if one he loved better than his own life were writhing there, I can conceive of his forging a note against the Bank of Fame, in favour of some would-be poetess, who is able and willing to buy his poems and opinions."

He turned almost fiercely upon me, his fine eyes piercing me, "Would you blame a man for not allowing his sick wife to starve?" said he.

I changed the subject and he became quiet, and we walked along, noting beauties of flowers and foliage, of hill and dale, till we reached the cottage.

At my next visit, Poe said, as we walked along the brow of the hill, "I can't look out on this loveliness till I have made a confession to you. I said to you when you were last here, that I despised fame."

"I remember," said I.

"It is false," said he. "I love fame—I dote on it—I idolize it—I would drink to the very dregs the glorious intoxication. I would have incense ascend in my honour from every hill and hamlet, from every town and city on this earth. Fame! glory!—they are life-giving breath, and living blood. No man lives, unless he is famous! How bitterly I belied my nature, and my aspirations, when I said I did not desire fame, and that I despised it."

Suggestive that the utterance on both occasions might be true to the mood that suggested them. But he declared that there was no truth in his first assertion. I was not as severe with him as he was with himself.

The autumn came, and Mrs. Poe sank rapidly in consumption, and I saw her in her bed-chamber. Everything here was so neat, so purely clean, so scant and poverty-stricken, that I saw the sufferer with such a heartache as the poor feel for the poor. There was no clothing on the bed, which was only straw, but a snow white spread and sheets. The weather was cold, and the sick lady had the dreadful chills that accompany the hectic fever

of consumption. She lay on the straw bed, wrapped in her husband's great-coat, with a large tortoiseshell cat in her bosom. The wonderful cat seemed conscious of her great usefulness. The coat and the cat were the sufferer's only means of warmth, except as her husband held her hands, and her mother her feet.

Mrs. Clemm was passionately fond of her daughter, and her distress on account of her illness and poverty and misery, was dreadful to see.

As soon as I was made aware of these painful facts, I came to New York, and enlisted the sympathies and services of a lady, whose heart and hand were ever open to the poor and miserable. A featherbed and abundance of bed-clothing and other comforts were the first fruits of my labour of love. The lady headed a subscription, and carried them sixty dollars the next week. From the day this kind lady first saw the suffering family of the poet, she watched over them as a mother watches over her babe. She saw them often, and ministered to the comfort of the dying and the living.

"My poor child," said Mrs. Clemm, "my blessed and beloved, who has gone before me. Mrs. — was so good to her. She tended her while she lived, as if she had been her dear sister, and when she was dead she dressed her for the grave in beautiful linen. If it had not been for her, my darling Virginia would have been laid in her grave in cotton. I can never tell my gratitude that my darling was entombed in lovely linen."

It seemed to soothe the mother's sorrow in a wonderful way, that her daughter had been buried in fine linen. How this delicate raiment could add so much to her happiness, I was not able to see, but so it was.

The same generous lady gave the bereaved mother a home for some time after the death of the poet. I think she only left her house to go to her friends in the South.

Soon after Poe's death, I met the aged mother on Broadway. She seized me by both my hands, regardless of the passers by.

"My Eddie is dead," she sobbed, hardly able to speak. "He is gone—gone, and left his poor Muddie all alone."

And then she thought of his fame, and she clung to me, speaking with pathetic and prayerful earnestness. "You will take care of his fame," said she: "you will not let them lie about him. Tell the

truth of my Eddie. Oh, tell the truth—tell the world how great and good he was. They will defame him—I know they will. They are wicked and envious; but you will do my poor, dear Eddie justice.” She pressed my hands convulsively. “Say that you will take my Eddie’s part,” said she, almost wildly.

“I can never do him injustice,” said I; “I assure you I never will.”

“I knew you never would,” said she, seeming greatly comforted.

I have said nothing of Poe’s genius. His works are before the world. Those who are able to judge of them will do so. There is no need to manufacture fame for the poet now. He cannot be pleased or benefited by it.

Poe has been called a bad man. He was his own enemy, it is true; but he was a gentleman and a scholar. His clear

and vivid perception of the beautiful constituted his conscience, and unless bereft of his senses by some poison, it was hard to make him offend his taste.

People may be starved, so that they will eat coarse, disgusting, and unhealthy viands, and a poet has human liabilities. We may be sure if Poe sold his poems, to be printed as the productions of another, or if he eulogized what he despised, that the offence brought with it sufficient punishment. Poor Poe! If the scribblers who have snapped like curs at his remains, had seen him as his friends saw him, in his dire necessity and his great temptation, they would have been worse than they deem him to have written as they have concerning a man of whom they really knew next to nothing.

Requiescat in pace!

THE DAY OF TRIAL.

Long study, and the most laborious application, were necessary to obtain those honours by which men of learning and genius were distinguished in the ancient Irish colleges. These honours entitled the successful candidates to take precedence of the warriors and nobles of the day, and to occupy a place which was second only to royalty itself.

In the rank of the Ollamhs, which was the highest degree conferred on the cultivators of the lighter muse, in those ancient academies, was the venerable and highly-gifted Madaghan, the chief poet and chronicler to the arch-king of Erin. His duty was to furnish the rhymes or metrical histories of the day; to compose those martial odes which were set to music and sung by the harpers at the public feasts; to retain in his memory no less than three hundred and fifty stories of past times, for the amusement and instruction of the people, and, in quality of bard, which he added to his other accomplishments, to execute with a ready finger the most intricate pieces of music. For these services he was usually rewarded, according to the custom of the time, with twenty milch kine, besides enjoying the privilege of free entertainment for a month after, and the atten-

dance of four-and-twenty servants. Merry were the companies which Madaghan enlivened with his presence, and long were his narratives remembered by the hearers, for no one understood so well the art of conveying solid instruction under the guise of mirth, and intermingling his most fanciful incidents with maxims of practical wisdom.

But although he often enlivened the hearts of others, his own was not without its cares. His only child, a son, who he hoped should inherit his talents and his fortune, proved to be deaf and dumb, and there remained no hope of his advancement in life. The father had seen all his relatives descend into the tomb before him, and felt his own life wasting rapidly away, without any prospect of leaving his son established in comfort behind him. His affliction at this circumstance was the keener, as the boy was beautiful, affectionate, and intelligent, beyond many of those who were rising fast in the esteem and favour of the public. The poor old Ollamh, who loved his son with all the tenderness of a father, sighed as he accorded to the children of his friends and neighbours those honours which his own boy could never hope to accomplish. It was not that the old man’s heart was

capable of so foul a passion as envy, but it was natural that, with the most benevolent feelings, the sight of filial merit and paternal happiness should remind him, by the contrast, of his own affliction. He was often visited by those remembrances of grief, for the consciousness of his own disappointment made him careful of inflicting a similar pain upon the hearts of other parents, by showing any needless rigour in his examination of the young candidates that came before him. His heart sunk and grew heavy under the weight of its own feelings, and he who knew so well how to soothe and even to banish the sorrow of another, was often in want of a comforter for his own.

The younger Madaghan showed that the deficiency in his senses did not extend to his intellect or to his heart. His eyes were ever fixed upon his parent. The slightest action of the old man's hand, or motion of his frame, was for him a swifter indication of his wishes than language would have been to another. He brought him his harp when he saw the clouds gathering upon his brow, although he knew not why it was that running his fingers along the chords of the instrument should inspire joy and life into the heart of his father, as well as of the listeners. Neither could he understand the cause of the old harper's grief, but he did all that lay in his power to ascertain and remove it. His efforts, however, could only aggravate the evil they were intended to counteract; and it was with pain and surprise he perceived, that the more he exerted himself to withdraw the arrow, the deeper did he infix it in the heart of the old man.

One evening when the aged Ollamh was striking a mournful air upon his instrument, while the sun was sinking in the west and flinging across their cottage door the shadow of an adjacent round tower, his son approached and bent his eyes upon his face with an expression of deep interest and anxiety. The earnestness of his look brought back some sorrowful recollections to the harper, who, letting his hand fall idly on his knee, endeavoured to trace in the blooming features of the youth, the semblance of his long-lost mother. Tear following tear flowed down the old man's cheek as he thought of the happiness of other times, until at length he pushed the harp aside with a feeling of heart-sickness, and sunk back on his tripod, overwhelmed at once by his recollections and his forebodings.

The young man started forward and flung his arms wide as if to solicit some explanation of this burst of sorrow. He pressed his hand forcibly upon his heart to express what was passing within. He uttered some passionate and inarticulate murmurs—threw himself at the feet of his parent—embraced his knees, and again looked up eagerly and inquiringly in his eyes. The father smiled through his grief at those demonstrations of affection, and laid his hand kindly on the curling ringlets of the youth, while he shook his head at the same time to express the hopelessness of his condition. The youth started to his feet and pointed to the four quarters of the world, intimating, by the liveliest gestures, his readiness to undertake any toil or journey that could restore happiness to his parent. Again the latter shook his grey hairs in silence and pointed up to heaven. The youth understood his meaning, and bending down with a feeling of deep though silent reverence, burst into tears, and rushed into the adjoining wood.

His knowledge of religion was distinct, and his feeling deep. He reflected on the mute answer of his parent, and resolved to follow up the intimation, by addressing himself for information and assistance to the Great Author of existence himself. The round tower before mentioned was attached to a church, in which were heard at this moment (but not by the unfortunate youth) the voices of the monks who chanted the evening service of their religion, accompanied by their small and sweet-toned stringed instruments then in use. He entered the chapel, and proceeded, with his hands crossed, and his head declining on his bosom, to the foot of the altar. He had no words to express his wishes, but the thoughts and aspirations of his heart flew to the throne of mercy with a fervour far excelling that of many, who, being gifted with the faculty of speech, use it in prayer, rather as a substitute than a vehicle for the feelings of the soul. He prayed long and ardently; with veneration, with faith, with confidence, and with resignation—for the soul of man when once taught to know and to love its God, needs no human instructions to teach it how to address and adore him. Perhaps the dumb boy's heart was better fitted to hear and understand the silent voice of heaven speaking within it, than his ears had never been opened to the sinful sounds of earth.

I will not presume to represent in lan-

guage that prayer which flew to the bosom of the Creator without the aid of words. Enough is said when I mention that, pure and disinterested in its object, it was heard and granted.

The youth was yet on his knees—yet agitated by one of those divine consolations that make the “tears of devotion sweeter than the joys of theatres,” when he was seized with a sudden pain in his ears, followed by the discharge of a thin liquid that seemed to burst within his throat. Immediately after, a multitude of new and wonderful sensations broke at once upon his spirit. How shall I give you any idea of their nature? Imagine yourself to stand in the centre of a spacious hall, which is filled with machinery in rapid motion; sending forth sounds of various kinds, stunning the ear with the clash of cymbals, the rolling of drums, the pealing of artillery, the crash of falling towers, and the warbling of wild instruments, all mingling together in an overwhelming chaos of sound, and you may conceive something of the sensations which bewildered the affrighted youth. After some moments, however, this confusion of noises abated, and his sense acquired the power of distinguishing the natural sounds by which it was effected. He tossed his arms into the air, and remained for a moment fixed in an attitude of ecstasy and astonishment. He seemed as if he had been suddenly hurried into a new state of existence. The sound of his own breath as he panted in the agitation of his spirit—the tinkling of the small silver bell that was rung at one of the closes in the service—the solemn voices of the choristers, with the murmuring of the sweet-stringed instruments—the sound of his own feet upon the tessellated pavement—the whispering of the wind among the boughs that shaded the open window—all filled him with wonder, ecstasy, and gratitude. His cheeks glowed, his eyes filled with fire, his brow was covered with perspiration, his heart swelled within his bosom as if it would have burst with the strength and intensity of its emotions, until at length, oppressed almost to fainting with the intoxicating happiness that this new faculty afforded him, he flung himself at full length upon the ground, and found relief in a passion of tears and thanksgiving.

Neither was he ignorant of the great importance of the benefit which he had thus received. He perfectly understood that he had now acquired that great

power, the want of which had hitherto kept him so far beneath the level of his companions, and shut him out from the walks of science and of learning. He felt his soul expand within him as he thought of the happiness which the knowledge of this great blessing would confer upon his aged father—and here a new idea started into his mind.

To complete the joy of the latter, he thought it would be better to defer the communication of this rapturous intelligence until he had ascertained the capabilities of the sense, and acquired some portion of the information which it was able to impart. This idea no sooner presented itself to his understanding than he resolved to embrace it. He returned home full of this exciting determination, and lingering long upon his pathway through the wood, in order to hear the song of the evening birds—the cooing of the wild pigeons—the twittering of the wren—the rippling of the small stream—and all the other sounds that broke so sweetly upon the stillness of the evening air.

The sound of his father's harp, as he reached the cottage door, furnished him with a new occasion for delight and astonishment. He paused, and gazed, with open eyes and lips apart, upon the minstrel, while the aged fingers of the latter ran rapidly along the chords—

— “With many a winding bout
Of linked sweetness long drawn out.”

The air was of a mournful mode, and young Madaghan wondered at the delicious sorrow which it diffused throughout his frame. Fearful, however, of betraying himself by his emotions, he passed his parent, and entered the house with a hurried and agitated step.

His passions and his genius, keen and active as they naturally were, became still more acute and susceptible under the influence of this new excitement. Joy, fear, sorrow—all the internal feelings of his nature, were called out into more active exercise by the stimulus which this exquisite sense continually supplied. Knowledge, which hitherto he had only received in filtered drops, now rushed like a torrent upon his soul; he felt as if the earth were too narrow to contain the bigness of his spirit. He was overpowered with the greatness of his own nature, and resolved that no single moment should be lost in converting to its most perfect uses

the new talent with which the Almighty had entrusted him.

In a few months he found himself fully capable of imitating all the sounds which he heard in society, and by which he perceived that men communicated their thoughts to one another. His quickness of observation and retentive memory had rendered him master of the uses and signification of the terms which he heard, and he practised in the recesses of the wood, far away from the ears of men, those modulations and inflexions of the voice which had charmed him most in the conversation of others.

He now felt the necessity of entrusting a second person with his secret; a person possessing both the power and the inclination to assist him in his design. He selected for this purpose no less an individual than the prior of the little monastery where he had received his hearing—a man who was perfectly well acquainted with his father, and possessed the esteem and love of all who were acquainted with him. It was not, however, that the pious ecclesiastic sought to be esteemed by them for the sake of enjoying their applause. Ambition of that nature is almost sure to disappoint itself.

The prior was in his oratory, when young Madaghan presented himself at the gate of the convent, and made signs to be admitted. The lay brother instantly complied, for the mean and truckling subterfuge of modern etiquette was in those days either unknown or despised. The young man passed into the presence of the prior, who received him with gentleness and favour. He had long observed the piety and filial affection of the poor deaf youth, and felt much interested in his fortunes, as well as in the afflictions of the father. But nothing could exceed his astonishment when the young man, trembling and almost weeping with emotion, addressed him in a distinct and articulate voice, and told him the story of the last few months.

"I wish," he continued, after he had left no incident of his narrative unrelated, "I wish to keep this circumstance a secret from my father, until I have made some considerable progress in the studies which become my age, in order that his surprise and delight may be the greater. I came to the resolution of applying to you for assistance, as I was sure from the kindness you always showed to my father and myself, that you would readily procure

me the opportunities of instruction which were necessary."

He was not deceived in his estimation of the good ecclesiastic's character. The latter entered with heartfelt pleasure and alacrity into his harmless project. The resolution and self-denial of the young man filled him with admiration, and he resolved to take the task of his instruction into his own hands. Months passed away, and the secret of the youth remained between his benevolent instructor and himself. His education was consummate in those particular walks of science which constituted the profession of his father; and he made no inconsiderable progress in those departments of general knowledge which were adapted to form and extend his mind, so as to render it the more capable of excellence in any particular avocation.

A day of awful interest to all the students in Meath now approached. It was the day of public competition amongst them for the lofty post of chief poet and chronicler to the king, which the aged Madaghan, finding its duties become too arduous for his declining health, resolved to resign in favour of the most deserving.

On the evening before the public examination, the old man felt an unusual heaviness press upon his spirits. The souls of worldly men, who have grown old in any particular vocation, are frequently so helpless in themselves, and so dependent upon worldly employments for mental occupation, that it seems to them like relinquishing life itself, to abdicate any long-accustomed and influential office; and this even when the infirmities of old age have incapacitated them for effectually discharging its duties. Such, however, was not the cause of the Ollamh's sorrow. He had long before learned the true object of his existence on earth, and wished, as his frame grew feeble and wasted slowly to decay, that he might, by placing his heavier cares on younger and stronger shoulders, obtain more leisure for the contemplation of that divinity into whose presence he must soon be introduced.

But his fears for the welfare of his unhappy son were not diminished, as he felt the time approach of their final separation. He had observed, with increasing concern, that the character and demeanour of the young man had of late been altered. His lively and intelligent art of gesticulation seemed to have abandoned him, and

in proportion as he acquired the language of society, he seemed to have lost that of nature. His cheek was pale and wasted from the closeness and intensity of his application, and the old man thought the hand of disease was on him. His eye had lost its accustomed quickness and restlessness, and became meditative and solemn in its expression. The change perplexed his parent, who thought he saw in what was in reality the effect of an improved understanding, the symptoms of its decay.

The young man's anxiety, likewise, became almost ungovernable on this evening; his spirits were hurried to and fro like a sea that is tossed by sudden tempests. Sometimes the anticipation of success, and of its consequences, excited him to a degree of almost painful ecstasy, and he was borne along upon the wings of triumph and exultation, until his head grew dizzy and his heart drunk with the fulness of his imagined rapture. Sometimes, a dark tide of fears would come rushing down upon his heart, and bode-ments of the ruin, failure, and disgrace that might attend him on the morrow, would shake his soul with terror. He used his utmost exertions to conquer those unreasonable emotions, and to cast all his cares upon the will of Providence, but it was an hour of severe trial for the fortitude of his character.

The father, occupied by his own feelings, did not observe the agitation of his son. When the latter, as usual, brought him his harp, after their evening meal, he motioned him to remove it again, and intimated by a gesture that his present sorrow was one which music could not allay.

The young man looked wistfully upon him. As the Ollamh caught his eye, he held out his hand with an affectionate smile, and drew him to his side.

"My poor boy," said he, unconscious that his words were understood, "to-morrow will be a bitter day for your father. When your mother first placed you in my arms, a beautiful and healthy child, I thought that I should one day see you capable of inheriting the fortunes and the duties of your father; and I scarcely mourned over her early tomb, when I looked upon your face and thought of the future. But Heaven (that blesses with calamity, as well as with good fortune) soon struck me for my vain ambition. The day is come, to which I looked forth so proudly; and you, my son, must stand

idly by, while the child of a stranger shall wear the gold ring, and strike the harp of your father. And yet, it is not even for this I am troubled; but, my poor forlorn boy, my limbs are growing old and feeble, and the lamp of life is flickering in its socket within me. When it shall be extinguished, I tremble to think of the darkness which shall envelope your fortunes!"

Never did the preservation of the young man's secret appear to him a task of greater difficulty than at this moment. All his magnanimity seemed insufficient to restrain the burning desire which he felt of flinging himself at his father's feet, and declaring the whole truth. His lips seemed almost trembling with the words of confession. He longed to embrace the old man's neck, and to exclaim, "your hopes, my dear father, shall not be blasted; my ears are not deaf—my lips are not dumb! Be comforted! your son shall yet inherit your honours. The gold ring and the harp shall not pass to the hand of a stranger. I am not the destitute being you suppose. The Almighty has heard my prayers, and made me capable of fulfilling that station in society, for which your fondness first designed me."

Repressing, however, by a violent effort of self-restraint, the impulse of his filial affection, he threw his cap on his head, drew his cloak around his shoulders, and hurried forth to find consolation and assistance in the advice of his preceptor.

The good ecclesiastic warned him against the indulgence of an anxiety, which had in it a mixture of worldly solicitude and impetuosity. He pointed out to him the distinction between that solicitude to obtain success, which is always a culpable and human feeling, and that care to deserve it, which is a paramount virtue. The first, he said, was sure to obstruct—the second seldom failed in promoting the progress of the aspirant.

"For yourself, my young friend," he continued, "I may inform you that your success on to-morrow is morally certain. I am acquainted with the qualifications of all your competitors, and I know that the most excellent must fall far short of you in skill and acquirement. When I tell you therefore that this occasion has not left me free from anxiety on your account, you must know that it is not with fears of your failure and disappointment that my mind is burthened. I look further than to-morrow for the dangers which are

likely to assail you. Your genius and the depth and intensity of your character, lead me to tremble for your moral welfare, when the restraint of discipline shall be removed, and you shall be entrusted to your own guidance upon the world of public life. I tremble the more, because I know it to be a general delusion of youthful genius to suppose, that it is not subject to those laws which govern the moral conduct of less gifted minds, and that it possesses a charter for self-legislation in its birthright. I tremble the more, because, all solitary as my life has been for many years, I know that world on which you are about to enter. When the tyrant Danes laid waste the country and pillaged the monasteries, I was one of those who escaped with life from the burning ruins of Bangor. The storms which shook me out of my peaceful solitude, compelled me to see more of men and of the world, than I had ever expected to behold. The lives of those whom I saw astonished me, accustomed as I was in my retirement to serious reflection. I saw many rush forward upon the theatre of life as if not merely ignorant, but totally and wilfully careless of the changes that were to follow the passing of the scene. Some, if they thought at all, seemed to suppose themselves only created for the purpose of enjoying the pleasures which the world afforded them, spun a few giddy rounds upon its surface, and sunk with a reeling head and sickened heart into its bosom. Some, scorning the levity which marked the conduct of those idlers, applied themselves to laborious toil and exertion, obtained the ends of their industry and sunk no less dissatisfied and disappointed into the grave. Some, too, as if profiting by the example of those who had gone before them, toiled neither for profit nor for pleasure, but contented themselves with the sensual indulgences that lay immediately within their grasp, crawled like worms along the surface of the earth, and then shrunk beneath the sod, unthought of and unlamented. A few souls, gifted with nobler energies, and feeling within themselves the void which told them they were made for nobler modes of enjoyment than any which they beheld around them, marked out a loftier path for their direction. They devoted their days to the pursuit of knowledge; and knowledge shone in upon their souls like sunshine. But there they rested. The light they found was more blinding to their souls than the darkness they had

left. They leaped a brook and they fancied they could leap an ocean. They looked only to the clear, open course that lay before them; they remembered not that its length was infinite, and death struck them before they had finished a single stage. Foolish men! I thought, as they beheld their ruin, you have taken a long way to a place that lay close beside you. The peasant—the dull but virtuous boor, whose ignorance filled you with scorn, shall now discover, before you, all that you sought to learn; he shall hear the mysteries of the great creation, from the Creator himself, while you are doomed to dwell in endless ignorance; he shall unravel all the wonders of the universe, while you shall still remain perplexed with partial theories and enigmatical explanations; the illimitable system shall be to him a paradise of light, while you shall dwell for ever in the hell of exterior darkness. Happy is the man, who pursues knowledge with a pure heart and simple intention, discovering at every step, new causes for divine love, and for increased humility; applying all the information he acquires, to the good of his fellow creatures, and to the perfection of his own virtues. O, Science! how frivolous are the efforts of thy votaries, when they mistake thy uses, and miscalculate thy power! O, Virtue! how ignorant is Science when compared to thee!

“I saw and thought these things, and I contrasted, with what I beheld, my own humble, but certain hope in the promises on which our faith is founded. I know and feel, that it is only in the fulfilment of that promise my soul can ever find content. I never looked on a sight of beauty or of interest with which my eye was so perfectly satisfied, that it could desire to see nothing more beautiful, and nothing more interesting. Our bards play well, and the voice of friendship is sweet to the ear; yet I have never heard, since life first filled my nerves, sounds which fully satisfied my sense of hearing. I have risen from a sick bed, and inhaled the perfume of the spring; but even then, in the ecstacy of recovered life and health, I could not say that my senses were perfectly satisfied with the enjoyment that was afforded them, nor can they be satisfied at any time in this world. It is so with one—it is so with all. That is a true word, young man, which says that the eye is not filled with seeing, nor the ear with hearing. For this I mourn and sigh—for this I fast and pray—for this I

hunger and thirst, and watch—for this promise, which is as certain of accomplishment to those who truly look for it, as that the sun which set to-night, shall rise to-morrow—the promise that the lover and practiser of virtue, shall inherit a lovelier and more lasting world, where the eye shall be filled with a certain light, and the ear with a certain sound, and all the senses and all the affections of the soul with a happiness that shall leave them no further desire nor capability of enjoyment.”

The morning dawned at length, and young Madaghan, accompanied by the prior, repaired to the place of meeting, where the Arch-king and his court were already assembled to decide upon the merits of the competitors. The principal trial of strength was an eulogium pronounced in verse upon the present holder of the office; but there were many prior contests in music and literature, in which it was necessary for the successful candidate to prove his excellence.

The Chief Poet and Chronicler proceeded to the place in his robes of state, the coat of various colours, the long white robe that flowed over his person, the cap that covered his head, the gold ring that glittered on his finger, and the harp that hung suspended from his neck, comprising within his costume the six colours, which only the royal and the learned were privileged to wear. He took his place in a small recess, apart from the assembly, where he waited the issue of the proceedings without seeing or being seen by the candidates. This arrangement was adopted from an obvious feeling of decorum, as Madaghan could not, without embarrassment, be present at his own panegyric.

The scene which the hall of assembly presented was one well calculated to abash the spirits and depress the hopes of the young aspirants. The Arch-king sat in front, in his regal insignia, while, at various distances around him, were placed the dignitaries of the court and camp, the chieftains of townships, and the knights of the various national orders in all their splendid varieties of costume and ornament. A multitude of inferior courtiers filled up the spaces all around, while an open place in the midst was reserved for the candidates.

Several persons ran, from time to time, to the recess of the Poet and Chronicler, to inform him of the progress of the contest. He heard their intelligence without much interest or emotion.

“The contest of the harp is decided!” cried one, running eagerly to the old man; “did you not hear the acclamations that burst from the people? The victory was awarded to a fair young man, of whose name all persons except your friend, the Prior, appear to be ignorant. His skill is astonishing! The melody flows from his instrument as if it were touched by the winds alone—so nimbly do his fingers move. No string ceases to tremble from the moment he takes the harp in hand, until he has laid it aside.”

“I rejoice,” said Madaghan, mournfully, “that the king shall not want an efficient minstrel. Hark! there is a second burst of acclamations. Who is the victor now?”

He was answered by the same person, who came running to him with greater eagerness than before.

“They have decided the second contest. The victory in reciting the Eye of the Battle has been obtained.”

“By my old pupil, Eagna?” asked the old man.

“No. Eagna’s composition attracted general admiration, but he was excelled by another—the same youth who obtained the prize in music. Never was there a finer genius. He rushed into his subject like a warrior armed for combat, bearing down before him all criticism—all thought of cavil or objection. His eye kindled, his cheek became inflamed, his form enlarged, his voice rang like the clang of a trumpet. His images started up one after the other, shining, exact and noble. The sounds of war found echoes in his numbers—the picture of the battle came before our eyes as he sung, until the knights laid their weapons bare—the standards shook in the hands of the bearers—the military chiefs sprang to their feet, as if to head an assault; while the war-cry of ‘Farrah!’ trembled on their lips, and the good king himself shook his sceptre as if it had been a javelin.”

“It is singular his name should be unknown,” said Madaghan, more interested than before; “I am sorry for poor Eagna’s disappointment, but the genius of this youth has touched me. Ah! my poor dumb boy! I have seen a fire in your eye that spoke of a burning spirit within, could it but find a voice for utterance.”

The last trial—the eulogy of the aged Madaghan was now proceeding. Again the roof trembled with the acclamations

of the multitude, and again the old man's informant was by his side.

"It is completed!" he exclaimed, "the election has fallen on the young man. You may well be proud of such an eulogist. So modest an appeal, so rational, so feeling, was never before pronounced. His hearers were moved even to tears, and yet so simple was his language, that they attributed all to your merit, and nothing to the eloquence of your panegyrist."

At the same moment the crowd separated, and the old Prior advanced, leading the successful candidate by the hand. His head hung down upon his bosom, and his hand trembled while he did homage to the superior rank of the old poet and chronicler, by laying aside his girdle, and removing the green cap from his head. Tears obscured the eyes of Madaghan while he placed the gold ring on the slender finger of the boy, and prepared to loosen the string by which the harp was suspended round his neck.

"My sweet-toned harp," he said, "after long and fond attachment we must be separated, but it is some consolation to know that I do not commit you to unworthy hands. Lift up your head, young man, and let me see the face of him who is to be my successor."

The victorious candidate remained on his knee, with his head still lowered, while his frame was shaken with sobs, and his tears washed the old man's feet.

"Rise!" said the latter, with dignity. "Tears become a child of song; but not when they flow like those of a maiden. Arise, and—Ha!—What? My child! Impossible! My boy?—Give me your hands, my friends! Prior, your hand!—This is some cheat—some mockery! Was this well? My poor dumb boy, who made you a party against your aged father?"

Confusion and sudden anger made the sensitive old man tremble exceedingly,

while he clung for support to his friends, unable to conceive the meaning of what he beheld. His perplexity, though not his wonder, ceased however when the youth extended his arms quietly, and said, with a delighted smile:—

"Father, rejoice! It is your own fond child that speaks to you. Heaven, long since, in pity to my prayer, restored my hearing, and I kept the blessing secret only for the purpose of enjoying the happiness of such a day as this. The day is come, and my joy is now complete."

The old man threw himself with a broken cry of joy upon the neck of his son. He gave utterance to the feelings of his heart in exclamations of rapture and repeated caresses, while the spectators pressed around with brimming eyes, to share in the gratulations of the happy relatives.

"It is enough!" he exclaimed, looking to heaven with an eye that glistened with delight and gratitude. "I am contented for this earth. This, O Almighty Being! was more than I desired, more than I deserved. Let those who have not experienced thy benefits, if any such there be, presume to be dissatisfied—we, at least, have no room within our hearts for anything but wonder, and praise, and love. Accept that love! accept that gratitude, my Maker and Benefactor! I prayed to thee, and thou hast heard me! Thou hast given peace to the old man's heart—thou hast dried the old man's tears—thou hast hushed his sighs—thou wilt suffer him to lay his white hairs in quiet hope within the grave. Thou hast blest me! My soul within me thanks and adores thy goodness!"

When he had spoken, he suffered his hand to fall over the shoulder of the youth, while the evening sun shone calm upon the group, and a silence, tender and profound, stole over the assembled multitude.

Few persons are altogether free from partialities and dislikes which reason does not sanction, and for which it can plead no excuse. Some mental association, now quite forgotten, may have twisted, and given a permanent displacement on one side or the other to the taste or passions. Now, I confess, that an hour-glass is a thing I very much dislike; and my memory can no more trace the origin of the foolish antipathy, than my judgment can justify its existence. It seems to me that there never was a time when I did not dislike the sight of an hour-glass: but I shall make no attempt to excuse myself for the senseless retention of such a feeling. But as a psychological phenomenon, it would be worth the trouble of analysis, if we had time and space to investigate its origin and growth. Sometimes I say to myself, it is evident why you dislike the sight of an hour-glass—what can be more ugly? That is true enough, I reply, for of all ungraceful forms, none surely are more ungainly, though women do sometimes envy its waspish waist. But this cannot excuse or account for my disgust. There are old-fashioned, ugly things enough in the family cupboard, and they are like old friends, increasing in value every day. I have a greater partiality for them to-day than I had yesterday, and am convinced the interest will increase as long as I live. My dog is beyond all comparison the ugliest brute in the county; any one within ten miles of my house would, if they had never seen him before, know where he came from, and call him by his name, so widely-spread is his reputation from the want of beauty; and yet everybody likes him, and thinks him the nicest dog they have seen. It is no use trying to excuse my dislike to an hour-glass on the plea that it is ugly.

Is it, then, because the hour-glass is an emblem of passing time that I abjure the use of the instrument—ay, even for the boiling of an egg? He is a fool who does not value time: it is life. Why should that which measures it be disliked? Time well spent is infinite gain. It is a pleasing reflection to know that we have been acting and thinking well; it is a satisfactory one to know, also, that we are, by earnest work doing well; and it is a hopeful one that we shall continue thus, and in perpetual beneficent action reap the harvest of our well-doing. These pleasing

thoughts an hour-glass might suggest, and it cannot be for this it is disliked.

But I have an indistinct recollection of certain old, grim figures of death with an hour-glass, piercing little innocents with a javelin, and the same personage in a not less repulsive attitude, armed with a scythe, mowing down men by thousands, always with his sand chronometer, as if altogether intent upon the destruction of as many as possible per minute. These sombre, monastic pictures took strong hold of my imagination in youth, and led me to think of death and dying, instead of life, and that holy thing, activity and work. To such morbid efforts of art as these, and the frightful decorations in an old edition of *Quarles' Emblems*, with bleeding hearts, and other inhuman subjects, my innate, as it is sometimes called, antipathy to an hour-glass may be traced, with far more probability than to a distaste for its form, or a desire to escape from the idea of passing time. If there be one thing more cheering than another in the prospect of the coming man, it is to be found in the acknowledgment that the holy purposes of life and religion are better secured by teaching the necessity of an active, useful, beneficent life, than by gloomy emblems of the certainties and sorrows of death.

But the hour-glass, though a painful subject when studied under the representations of the illustrator of Quarles, who, strangely enough, evoked fear to excite love, is a fit subject for a more lively essay, and may be associated with the activities, pleasures, and blessings of life, as well as its disappointments, fears, and certain termination. These, however, are subjects we must leave to the moralist and divine; our present object is to illustrate its philosophy by its construction and uses, and to teach a few scientific facts with the assistance of a toy.

It has been said, whether in joke or earnest we do not know, that a certain king once asked his queen how an apple came inside a dumpling. If royalty could be disquieted by the want of such information, we should be without excuse were we to omit to tell how sand is introduced into an hour-glass. The form of an hour-glass is known to all our readers; it consists of two glass bulbs, united by a thin tube, and it most nearly resembles a dumb-bell, with a very short and thin stem, or

what a wasp would be if it had a body somewhat less pointed at the tail on each side of its slender and fashionable waist. The blowing of these bulbs is an everyday process in a glass-house; and those who have visited one of these interesting manufactories must be aware of the facility with which an expert glass-blower can draw, when required, hair-like threads from a molten mass. These two operations being understood, there will be no difficulty in finding a way to introduce the sand. Every young chemist who studies his science aright is accustomed to work in glass; and the operation most frequently required is to close, or, in the terms of the art, hermetically seal, the glass vessels in which his experiments are to be performed. Should he want a thermometer, he closes the open end by directing upon it the flame of a blow-pipe while the contained liquid is boiling; and as the glass approaches a liquid state, he moulds it to the form required. Nor would he, if at all expert, find it much more difficult to make and close an hour-glass than to blow a bulb at the end of a glass tube, bend it into the form he prefers, and seal the open part when he has introduced the substance on which he intends to perform an experiment.

The use of an hour-glass, now clocks and watches can be bought for a few shillings, may be doubtful; but as an antique instrument for the measurement of time it is, to say the least of it, an interesting contrivance, and a curious antiquity. It is designed and constructed upon the assumption that equal quantities of sand will flow through the same aperture in the same period of time. But whether this be true or false is a matter of little importance in the construction of the instrument, for it is always made to measure some specific period. The inventor may have made the first to run for an hour, and from this it may have derived its name; but the time it shall measure is at the option of its maker; and it is as easy to make one that shall run out in a minute, as one that shall continue for an hour. Despise it as we may, in comparison with many more continuing chronometers, it is the produce of a clever thought; and though melancholic artists and morbid versifiers have converted it to frightful uses, we should like to know the name and see the face of the man who first compared his life to the flow of a definite quantity of sand through a glass artery, and materialized the idea in the construc-

tion of an hour-glass. One might fancy him to be some shrivelled, hollow-eyed alchemist, who had wasted life in perpetual efforts to find an elixir that would preserve it, and to whom every unsuccessful experiment suggested the decay of health and the necessity of making another trial quickly. With what intense interest would he watch it running in ceaseless stream from one bulb to the other, and with what a heavy sigh turn it over to run back again, eyeing it askant at intervals by the red light of his glowing furnace! Or its inventor may have been some melancholic recluse, familiarized with deaths' heads and cross-bones, coffins, and graves, till they had lost all their horrors, and life prolonged made it appear perpetual. With what a malicious satisfaction must he have turned this hour-glass over and over, as the gambler tosses his dice, and chuckled with the idea that he had at last cut time into slips of an hour's length, and that every one as it passed made one less to come. But we have no fancy for either of these enthusiasts; we would rather believe that it was the invention of some earnest, cheerful man, who, conscious of the value of his time, and the claims that God and man had upon it, needed some registry of its flight when the mind was lethargic, and industry flagged. This is the man we admire and study; and the hour-glass in his hand pleases us better than in the bony grasp of a skeleton.

Simple as the hour-glass is as a mechanical contrivance, many astronomical discoveries must have been made before its invention. One of man's first necessities in daily life was a means of dividing and subdividing time. The rising and setting of the sun, or what is called the natural day, was from the beginning a division of time sufficient for the purposes of pastoral life, just as the alternation of seasons guides the agriculturist. The apparent motion of the sun, or, to speak more plainly, its height above the horizon, taught the rudest and least thoughtful men how to divide the day into parts, and to regulate the times of the simple operations required in daily life. But as the natural day varies in its duration, an artificial division was necessary; and to discover and arrange such a system as should be consistent with nature, and convenient in its social application, was probably the first problem man attempted to solve. By watching the progress of the sun through the zodiac he obtained

the great primary division of time—a year. The more rapid revolution of the moon gave him another and shorter period—a lunar month. But the greatest discovery connected with the computation of time was the division of the great circle representing the path of the sun, into 360 degrees, and the division of that into twelve equal parts of thirty degrees each, representing in the motion of the sun a solar month. Many hundred years before the invention of the hour-glass all this had been done, and the month had been divided into weeks, the weeks into days, the days into hours, and hours into minutes. We speak of it as an antiquity, though it is one of a modern age, and is rather the representative of a slothful, uninquiring, inert period, than of the thoughtful investigation of the first, or the bold, enterprising ingenuity of the present century.

It would be a mockery of science to speak of this instrument as having the least pretension to be called a correct measurer of time. To compare it with an old eight-day clock, such as we remember to have seen in grandfather's kitchen, and of which we have as many pleasant recollections as of any inanimate object we have known, would be highly ridiculous. Why, the pendulum itself, balanced on a knife-edge, without the clock, would measure time better, if one took the trouble to count its vibrations. In truth, our hour-glass is a toy, and not a chronometer: curious, but not very useful. The student who would divide his time into periods of equal length, might adopt it as a silent companion; but the necessity of watching its progress, and the consequent distraction of his mind, would soon cause him to reject it as a useless thing.

But before we abandon this old and now almost useless thing, it may be studied for an instant as the expositor of one great principle in nature which it took a Newton to discover, and upon which the existence of the world itself depends. The fall of unsupported bodies is a phenomenon so common that few people think it necessary to ask or give a reason for their doing so. If an uneducated man were asked why a stone thrown into the air falls to the earth, he would probably reply that it was natural—that it could fall no other way; or, thinking even such vague unmeaning phrases to be above the dignity of his

reason, disdain to give an answer. But there is a cause for every effect; and the sand in the hour-glass has no more power in itself to fall through the little aperture left for that purpose than it has to remain in the upper bulb without falling when unsupported. There is something to draw it downwards, or it would remain where it was placed. The power or force which causes it to fall is as real as that which draws a piece of soft iron to a magnet, and as invisible. In what this attraction consists, in what way it envelopes all matter, or where it resides, science has not discovered, and will scarcely venture to predict. But on that account it is not the less real. Still more strange may it be to some minds, that though the source of the attraction cannot be ascertained, its laws are perfectly understood. The revolution of worlds, as well as the fall of a handful of sand, is under its control; and were it to be for an instant suspended through the universe, the event would be followed by an inextricable disorder and unlimited ruin. A stone thrown into the air would move for ever in a path which would be the continuation of the straight line in which it commenced its journey; and the earth itself, no longer retained in its orbit by the attraction of the sun, would, at the moment of the suspension of the force, fly from the source of its heat, and the support of its vitality, in the direction in which it happened to be at the time moving. The attraction which draws the grain of sand towards the earth is the conservative power of the universe: it is the agency by which the Creator sustains, regulates, and preserves the order He has established. The Omnipotent has placed all matter under the same invisible control. The world and the atom are governed by laws, and those laws are universal; they are parts of the same great family; and the wisdom of the Creator is in no material arrangement better proved than in the equal preservation of one and the other, the part and the whole, under a unity of design and universality of power.

We might make this the text for a treatise on mechanics, or found upon it an exposition of the motion of the celestial bodies. If such were our object, we should first demonstrate the laws of gravitation,—that is to say, of the force which causes all bodies, great and small, to attract each other. This being done to our own satisfaction, and the anticipated advantage of our readers, it would

be comparatively easy to show under what circumstances bodies may be made to move in curves by the united action of gravitation and the force of projection illustrating all we had to say on this subject, as authors have done hundreds of times already, by a sling and a stone. To give a reason for motion in different curves, it would be necessary to explain how the path of a moving body is changed by increasing or decreasing the force of gravitation or that of projection. These difficulties being cleared out of the way, what could restrain us from following the elliptic orbits of the planets, or the parabolic curves in which those erratic fiery Bedouins of the solar realm sweep through its pathless expanse? But we, like Galileo of old, care for none of these things at present. It is enough for us to profess just what an hour-glass teaches, and wait for deeper truths till we have another teacher.

But the philosophy of the hour-glass does not end here; the sand itself, apart from its uses in the instrument, deserves a passing thought. Since the day it was produced by crushing and pounding, it has had no resting-place; for its fate has always been what it is now in its imprisonment, to wander backwards and forwards without ceasing. A north wind brought it to one shore, a south wind drove it to the opposite one—it has visited ocean caves, and been piled in banks the tides could scarcely cover—it has been swept over deep valleys in the embrace of ocean—it has been carried over the burning desert by the fever-laden simoom. Upon the seashore it has borne the impress of

the tidal ripple—upon the desert the foot-mark of the camel. If we could record its wanderings, what a strange history would it be! One cannot help wishing that it had a tongue to tell all that has happened on that fiery desert, between Egypt and the old land of promise, from the time when it was a part of the shifting bed of an ocean sound, to the day when it was picked up by an Anglo-Indian to be preserved in an hour-glass as a memento of his journey. What a sad record of human woe and insatiable ambition would it unfold, of the period when the Pharaohs built the old pyramids which Abraham passed and wondered at when he sought Egypt with his beautiful wife Sarah, to escape the famine that was in the land of Canaan. We may imagine with what deep pathos it would dwell on that scene when the Patriarch stood to watch, in pity and wonder, the silent and moody listlessness with which the miserable serfs laboured under their task-masters, with levers and pulleys, inclines and rollers, to raise the hewn stone, and build a monument of record to the tyranny of power, and the abject submissiveness of ignorant poverty—that a king might teach the world, in a monument of enduring stone, the similitude and difference of the extremes of human degradation—restless, unsatisfied tyranny, and yielding, wrong-bearing slavery. Over the same dreary desert, the sand might say, the Ishmaelite brought Joseph when sold by his brethren, little thinking that he would be the Governor of Egypt, and “save many people alive.”

THE ENCHANTED MILL.

A FAIRY TALE.

CHAPTER I.

HOME FROM THE WARS.

A JOLLY soldier was returning from the wars; he had fought bravely and his heart was in the right place. With his knapsack on his back, his pipe in his mouth, and cudgel in his hand, he marched along his road, and thought with pleasure of the next inn, where he intended to turn in and dine. His last night's lodging had been wretched, the bread hard, and the beer sour. Engaged with such consoling thoughts, he did not notice that he had left the high road; the way became continually more desolate, the bushes denser, and before he knew where he was, he found himself in a wood. "All right," the merry fellow thought; "it's pleasant walking in the shade, the tobacco does not burn away so quick as where the wind is blowing, and a song sounds as well again in the woods. Every stupid bird knows that as well as I do."

Soon after, the sun stood right over his head, and not a breath moved in the forest. When his song was at an end, he heard the chafers buzzing and the rustling of the lizards that crept into the bush at the sound of his footfall; but all around him the day was the more oppressive and close.

As he walked along thus, he noticed that something white moved along in the air before him, like a small round cloud, which, shaken by the wind, assumed all sorts of shapes. "Halloa!" he muttered, "what a strange smoke my tobacco sends out to-day; it plays all sorts of tricks and assumes such queer figures right ahead of me. At one moment it looks like a cloud, at another like a bird, then like a face, again like a hand making signs to me. I never saw such a thing in my whole life." But his pipe was soon burnt out, and yet the smoke did not disperse.

He rubbed his eyes, but the white thing still shimmered ahead of him, and he now saw clearly that it was a large butterfly, such as he had never seen before.

With his eyes steadily fixed on the fluttering insect, he soon lost the last trace of a footpath; at the same time his hunger was troubling him, and he saw no sign of a house far or wide, much less a smoking kitchen chimney. "Comrade," he shouted to the butterfly, which still fluttered before him wherever the road was easiest,

"you seem to know your way about here. For the fun of the thing, I will enlist under your flag for a season; so how would it be, suppose you took me to good quarters as speedily as possible?" And he obediently followed his new leader.

The forest soon grew clearer; a chattering streamlet could be heard, ever nearer and nearer; a dog barked in the distance, and ere long he heard the clattering of a mill. The fiercest regimental band and the most splendid tattoo had never sounded so agreeably to him as this simple sound, for his excited fancy soon summoned up entire companies of roast fowls and geese and pigs, in rank and file, which marched straight into his mouth to the sound of the mill-wheel.

The thought restored all his vigour; henceforth his legs moved along of themselves, though before he had dragged them with difficulty after him. He speedily detected between the trees a straw roof, on which the sun glistened, then a hedge appeared behind the thicket, and at last, when he emerged from the bushes, an old, dilapidated mill stood on an open spot right before his eyes. What a pleasant prospect!—the only pity was, that the door was closed, the black chimney rose smokeless into the air, and, far and wide, not a trace of human beings could be found, nor the sound of a voice heard.

The white butterfly flew straight up to the house, and crept in through the key-hole without any ceremony. The soldier, with the best will in the world, could not follow it on such a road.

"Hold your row!" he shouted to a rough-haired dog, which, tugging furiously at its chain, was barking hoarsely at him over the ruined palings. The soldier picked up a stone and the brute was quiet; then he shook the door and lock, but it did not move. "Halloa, house! open the door!" he shouted, and banged away both with stick and heels, but all remained quiet.

"What a set of curmudgeons!" the poor hungry fellow growled to himself, and looked around him. The only living being he saw on the other side of the stream was an old, long-haired donkey, which was dining on a tuft of thistles, and lazily raised its eyes to him.

"Oh, you most lucky brute!" the soldier shouted, "I wish I had a dinner I could enjoy so much as you do those thistles. But I wont stand it," and he

gave such a fierce kick at the door that it flew open. "Victory!" he shouted, and swung his hat. Singing and whistling, he entered the house with shouldered cudgel.

CHAPTER II.

IN STRANGE COMPANY.

Not a soul was to be seen in the mill; the wheel still kept on turning, and the posts and walls of the tottering house trembled to the same regular tune. His shout of "House!" died away in the smoke-stained passage. Obeying a correct instinct, he walked past two locked doors to the last, which stood open, and that naturally led to the kitchen.

Matters looked black enough there. Cabbage and turnips lay half peeled on the ground, and the knife by their side. On the fire over the burnt out-wood hung a cauldron full of water, but the cook was absent without leave. In her stead, a brown cat sat on a stool, twinkling its eyes; then it looked at the soldier in a most melancholy way and twinkled them again. He looked into the pots—all empty! "Why, things seem no better here than in my own stomach. But perhaps the dinner is prepared in the sitting-room, and I have arrived just in time to pitch into it."

Another door led to the keeping-room, but there was no one in it. An old black hen was sitting on a cushion at the narrow window. On a table by its side lay knitting-needles, spectacles, a hymn-book, a bunch of keys, and an open snuff-box. With this exception, all was silent save the ticking of the clock and the rustling of the butterfly which had conducted the soldier to this spot, and was now frantically dashing its head against the window-panes.

The soldier took up a position right in front of the hen. It had always been his fashion to talk loudly with everything he came across—with men or animals, with his musket or his boots. Giving a military salute, he said, "Perhaps your ladyship is commandant of this fortress?"

The hen twinkled her swollen red eyelids, as if replying in assent. "Good," he then continued; "I have to inform your excellency that I, Hans Quäkenberger, discharged musketeer, am disposed to take possession of this fortress or mill, without further palaver. Do you agree to it?" The hen raised her head as if nodding to him. "Bravo! old lady," the

soldier then said; "the capitulation is completed, and I will now make myself comfortable."

He threw his knapsack into the corner, pulled his boots off his wearied legs, and then looked round for slippers. Nothing of the sort was to be seen in the room, and in order to find some, he poked his head through the adjoining door. This led into a bed-room, which looked very pleasant, as if a pretty girl lived in it. There was no dust on the furniture; myrtles and rose-bushes stood on the window-sill, and beneath them was an open pianoforte, with a music-book in front of it; but for all this not a living being, save a delicate turtle-dove, sitting on the back of a chair before the piano. The poor bird did not appear in a very happy temper; it had puffed out its feathers, and drawn its neck in; its head was hanging sorrowfully on one side, and its eyes were steadfastly fixed on the music-book.

"I beg a thousand pardons, my dear creature!" the soldier said to the dove, and swept the ground with his cap as he stood in the doorway. The dove shook its feathers timidly, as if trembling all over.

"So truly as I am an honest fellow," the soldier said, soothingly, "if I were to be converted into a wolf by sheer hunger, I could not prey upon you, my little darling, for I feel quite in love with you."

At these words, the dove looked at him so kindly, and yet so mournfully, that the poor fellow's heart became quite soft. He crept back from the room and closed the door. Of course, these chastened feelings did not last long, and he continued his visitation of the house.

Opposite the room, a door led into a species of garret. In it were two good beds, and beneath each a pair of slippers. From a nail hung a soft, quilted, flowered dressing-gown, along the wall, half-a-dozen pipes, of which one was already charged, and a pistol. All came as if summoned. The slippers soon covered his feet, the dressing-gown his person, and all he wanted now was a good dinner. As regards the latter point, any soldier who has served a campaign requires no teaching.

In the first place, he took up the bunch of keys right under the old hen's nose. She clucked and flapped her wings, as if defending a brood of chickens. But it was all of no avail. "Old lady," he shouted, "consider yourself fortunate that I do not take you by the collar and twist your neck." The hen straightway let her feathers droop and hid behind the stove.

The soldier then fetched potatoes and bacon, bread and cheese from the larder, and a mug of beer from the cellar. After arranging all this on a table in the keeping-room, he threw himself with much dignity into an easy-chair, and attacked the food as if it were his deadly enemy, though, in fact, just at that moment he loved nothing in the world so much.

The meal was ended, the mug emptied, his moustache wiped on the sleeve of the dressing-gown, when all at once such a fatigue overpowered him that he could not resist the seductions of the beds he had lately seen. He went into the bedroom and bolted the door behind him. On looking back accidentally through the glass door, he was amused to see how lively the battle-field he had just left—the dining-table, namely—had suddenly become. The hen had crept out from behind the stove, the cat come in from the kitchen, and the dove flown up. All were now busily engaged on the table, greedily devouring the crumbs that lay scattered about. He had no idea of disturbing them.

Though he was so fatigued, his good spirits did not desert him. With a shout, he threw up the slippers to the ceiling, and, without undressing, sprang with one bound into the nearest bed. He had scarce closed his eyes ere he began to snore, which formed a most harmonious accompaniment to the clatter of the mill-wheel.

CHAPTER III.

THE WHITE DOVE.

THE next morning—it was a Sunday—the soldier woke at the moment the sun was gilding his russet-moustache. The first thing he saw was the old hen. It was sitting on the cushion of the bed next to his. It flapped its wings, and looked eagerly towards the window. How strange! the hairy old donkey was standing outside and snuffling at the panes; it made a horrible grimace to the hen, as if wishing it “Good morning!”

The silent manœuvres of the two creatures afforded our merry fellow much amusement for a time.

As the hen raised its wings higher and higher, he saw something shining under its body. “Here with it!” he shouted, and drew it from under her. It was the beloved bunch of keys to which he owed such an appetizing meal. The hen became furious, as on the previous occasion; but receiving

a smart tap on the bill, it flew behind the stove, and the donkey’s head disappeared from the window.

All these circumstances would have set anybody else thinking, but our soldier knew neither fear nor reflection. In a second he was out of bed, and soon made a tour round the house, as he smoked his pipe (it was one of the long ones he found in the bedroom).

In the sitting-room and kitchen he found everything as on the previous day. When he reached the other bedroom, where he had seen the dove, he suddenly stopped. At one moment he made up his mind to enter, but then something held him back. This came from a dream he had during the night, in which strange things had happened to him. He had forgotten them again, it is true; but still they had left a feeling upon him such as he had never had before.

Suddenly he heard some one in the room gently playing a morning hymn on the piano. Only a human being could do that, surely. He laid his ear to the door, and listened. He knew the tune well that was being played: it was a hymn his mother was so fond of singing at home. Between the sounds of the keys he could hear the gentle cooing of the dove, “Cucuruh! cucuruh!” He could make nothing more out, but this “cucuruh” sounded piously and sweetly. His dream of the past night came back to him, and he felt as serious as if he were at church, although curiosity drove him to peep through the crack of the door.

Not a soul was to be seen, but the dove was sitting on the piano with outstretched wings; it moved softly and gently over the keys, and with its head turned to the window sang its morning hymn, in which all the woodland birds joined in full chorus.

That was a real Sunday morning!

The soldier stood at the door and did not move; gradually, however, as if lost in deep thought, he began twisting his mustachios, first with one hand, then with the other.

“Nonsense!” he muttered, and wheeled to the left, but very gently. Then he walked on his toes to his knapsack, from which he took a letter; he sat down in the cosy chair, and read it as fervently as if it were a prayer-book. His mother had recently written him the letter from home. He still held his pipe between his lips, but it had gone out long before, though he had not noticed it. Such a thing rarely happened to him.

CHAPTER IV.

THE NIGHT-ALARM.

OUR hero soon arranged himself comfortably in the mill. Every day he fancied that he would at length see a human face. He had various reasons for thinking so. On his arrival he had found the wheel busily turning, and ample stores of wheat and flour. Even supposing the miller and his family did not return, his customers must come to fetch their flour or bring their wheat to be ground. Besides, he at times thought whether he would not plant his own flag on the old deserted mill. His deceased father had also been a miller, and our soldier had helped him bravely when a lad. It had always been his chief wish to be in possession of a mill; but desolating war had marched through the country, and drawn a black mark through this white calculation. His parents had been beggared, his father died soon after, and himself summoned to serve. He was now taking home in his knapsack a few crowns, but they were not sufficient to buy a millstone, much less a mill.

For a whole month he lived in this solitude: something held him, he knew not what. In the morning he attended to the mill, in the afternoon he went out shooting. The main reason why he felt so at home in the mill was because he had learned to love the present inhabitants—the hen, the cat, but, above all, the dove. They were, it is true, nothing but dumb animals; but from his youth he had been kind to such, though never to any as he was to these. The watch-dog he also fed faithfully, and would even endure the donkey out in the meadow, though it annoyed him at times by its intrusiveness. The brute would always persist in getting into the house, and so he was compelled to close doors and windows carefully; and this was doubly necessary, for if the donkey wanted to get in, the dove wished to fly out, especially when the old donkey's head was visible at the window. The dainty bird had grown so accustomed to the soldier that it would take anything from his hands, and in gratitude played him many a soldier's tune on the pianoforte.

In such cases, Hans could not hear and see enough. In truth, he could not understand himself. He was formerly the jolliest fellow in the world, a muscular grenadier, a man to whom it had been a delight to take an enemy's battery by storm; and now the same man was talking like a schoolboy, feeding a dove with bits

of sugar and crumbs. It was very strange. Still, it was so.

One day the soldier had been out in the woods again, and shot rabbits for amusement. He had gone a very great distance, yet found no way out of the wood. A few paths crossed each other, but they only served to lead him astray: he noticed, too, distinct marks of the donkey's hoofs, which had probably recently carried wheat to the mill. Tired with his walk, he determined on making himself merry for that night. He fetched a couple of bottles of wine from the cellar, and emptied them to his mother's health and that of his companions in the house, but specially of the darling dove. Then he went to bed. He could not close an eye for the stifling heat, so he opened the large window to have a breath of fresh air. This produced the desired effect, and he was soon fast asleep.

It might be about midnight when he was aroused by a loud noise near him.

"Halloa!" he shouted; "is the old ramshackle place tumbling about my ears?"

It was dark as pitch, for the moon had not yet risen above the forest. Sleepy as he was, he felt the other bed which stood next his. Something resembling a sack of flour lay on it. This calmed him. "The ceiling cannot have been quite firm," he thought, "and a sack has tumbled through. Well, it did not hurt me—that is a comfort."

He was soon snoring again as before, but not for long. He awoke with a heavy pressure on his chest. On feeling, he found it was something hard and hairy. Half in sleep, he thought it was his knapsack, threw it from him, and went to sleep again. Then he dreamed that an enormous cannon was fired every second at his left ear, which puffed the smoke in his face; he tried to turn his head on the other side, but there stood a gigantic gunner, who held out the washer to him, which tickled him so about the nose and mouth that he was forced to laugh loudly, and thus woke again for the third time. But the tickling and noise which disturbed his rest did not leave off.

He sat up in bed. The moon had now risen over the trees, and shone through the open window on the adjoining bed. Eh! what a sight presented itself! The cannon was nothing but the head of the old shaggy donkey which lay fast asleep by his side, and puffed its breath most disagreeably in his face. One of the donkey's forepaws, which had lain so heavily on the soldier's chest, now lay on his pillow, close by him.

"Oh, oh, my fine fellow," the grenadier said, as he leapt from his bed, "we'll soon send you to the right-about."

He had taken up his faithful cudgel, and raised it high in the air to give the sleeping animal the full weight of his arm; but at this moment the hen flew out from behind the stove, and right into the soldier's face: it repeatedly struck him in the eyes with its wings, so that he could not see where his blows fell. By this time the donkey was awake, and started up, so that the bed cracked again, and fell to pieces. With some difficulty it crept out of the ruins, and began a most furious attack on its assailant. It kicked out before and behind, and bit and snapped on all sides. The soldier was hard set in the confined room, and to add to his misfortune the tabby cat now leapt through the window. Before he could prevent it, the cat had leaped on his back, and scratched his face to such an extent that he was obliged to let his cudgel fall. At the same time the watch-dog tugged so furiously at its chain, and barked so loudly, that Hans feared every moment that it might fall on him, too. At the height of his troubles he remembered the pistol; it hung over the pipes on the wall, and the moon shone brightly on it. He was going to seize it, when he saw the dove sitting upon it: it had flown in through the open window. Timidly the bird pecked his hand, as if unwilling to surrender the weapon. The soldier hesitated, but the furious animals rushed on him again. Further delay could not be thought of. "Be off with you!" he shouted, and pointed the pistol at the donkey; "be off, or I will line your stomach with lead, so that you shall have something to digest for life."

He was about to fire at the brute, when the dove began fluttering backwards and forwards in front of the muzzle, so that he did not dare to pull the trigger. The donkey took advantage of the delay; it bolted through the open window, the hen and cat after it, and after awhile the dove followed them. Now, though, Hans' anger was aroused anew, and he fired the pistol haphazard after the flying brutes.

Had he hit one of them? He did not know. He could only see them disappear among the trees in the moonlight. The watch-dog had also broken its chain, and was following them.

It was all over with sleep. The soldier's own thoughts allowed him no rest. At one moment he laughed heartily at his heroism, at having driven a poor old

donkey to flight with a pistol. Then again he felt a fear whether his bullet had struck any one in the forest, for he fancied he had heard a peculiar cry immediately after he had fired. The day at last dawned.

He did not enjoy his breakfast, for he felt so desolate. No dove now came to feed out of his hand. He felt ashamed of his melancholy, and yet he could not drive it away. Now he felt tired of the mill and all connected with it, and decided on setting out again the next day, even if he had to march through a desert.

But before he could retire to bed for the last time he had much to do. The bed-room looked like nothing so much as a demolished fortress—beds, chairs, pipes, all had been disposed of during the nocturnal contest.

After dragging the mattresses with some difficulty out of the heap, he noticed under the bed a broken chest. He turned the lamp on it, and to his surprise bright crowns flashed in his eyes. Many a soldier would have considered it fair prize, but our hero could distinguish between peace and war. "Ill-gotten money is of no use," he said; "the crowns may wait quietly for their master. He may come back to-morrow, and then he will see that he has had an honest fellow for a guest." He carefully nailed up the chest again, and thrust it in a corner. Then he threw himself on the bed.

CHAPTER V.

THE ARREST.

HE could not fall asleep. Continually he thought of the unknown owners of the mill, and whether he should ever see them. That they were living, the pile of crowns he had found in the tottering mill sufficiently proved. For all that, he felt no desire to take the seductive treasure.

Gradually, however, his eyes closed; but after a short rest he started up again, for he fancied he could hear the braying of trumpets outside. It could not be the mill-wheel, for he had stopped that. He listened again: it must be the wind. He grew calmer; but all at once it sounded again like distant bugle-calls. At length he distinctly heard the march of a dragoon regiment, in which he had served before joining the grenadiers. He flew to the window. Nothing could be seen save the broken moonbeams playing through the trees, and yet the sounds appeared close to the mill.

"I cannot stay here, that is certain," he shouted as he dressed himself, and put the pistol in his belt; then, swinging his faithful cudgel, he ran blindly into the forest, in the direction of the bugle-calls. At first he got on tolerably well, but he soon entered dense brushwood, while the martial sounds grew louder around him: they seemed to be continually moving about in the forest.

He stopped and looked round him. He imagined he could see a cavalry regiment cantering amidst the dark oak trees, with glistening helmets and accoutrements, and sabres like moonbeams, while the horses were snow-white. He turned his head to the other side: there he saw the same sight. He began to grow dizzy; he ran blindly in all directions, till he reached a ravine. He entered it, but soon saw three waterfalls at the other end which barred his progress. He turned back, but three dragoons barred his progress. They were sturdy fellows, mounted on small horses, but dressed in splendid uniforms, white, blue, and silver.

"Who goes there?" our hero cried.

"Enemies," was the reply.

"Very good," Hans said, as he drew his pistol.

"To take you before the court-martial."

"Hoho! for that you will need four persons; three to carry me, and myself, if I were coward enough to yield. Come on, my moonshine heroes, my young milk-sops! come on, if you have hearts in your bodies!"

He held out the pistol against them. He was answered by a loud burst of laughter, which was re-echoed a thousand-fold from the rocks.

"You barking curs," the soldiers said, furiously, "take that for your yelping!" and he fired the pistol among them.

The shot pealed through the narrow ravine like a thunderclap. The three dragoons stood uninjured before him, but he had felt such a recoil through his whole body in firing the pistol that his limbs appeared powerless, and the pistol fell from his hand.

"I am your prisoner, and ready to follow you," he at length said.

The dragoons took him in their midst, and led him along the ravine. Hans walked silently with them; he had no thought of fear, but only a species of melancholy weighed upon him. "If I must die," he said to himself, "I must. I feel sorry for it, but it must happen once. I wish I could only let my poor mother know what has happened to her poor

Hans. Ah! if I had my dear dove, I would fasten a note round its graceful neck, and it would be sure to oblige me by flying home with it."

CHAPTER VI.

THE COURT-MARTIAL.

WHILE engaged with these thoughts, he had reached with his companions an opening in the rock, through which they went down into an extensive valley. All around jagged masses of rock rose into the air, while beneath was a grassy meadow overshadowed by birch-trees and aspens, through which winding streamlets ran.

A warlike march was commenced, and regiments of cavalry came up on all sides, forming a hollow square, in which the judges, from a general down to a private, took their places. They solemnly seated themselves on blocks of stone; the accused was led forward, and the trial commenced.

A private dragoon stepped forth as accuser. His name was "Butterfly," and no name was better suited for him. He was quite a little fellow, in a white horseman's cloak, like the cocoon of a butterfly; the points of his light moustache stood out like two feelers from his plump round face. He spoke as follows:—

"Severe judges, since the last full moon I have been on duty at the forest-mill, where this dragoon and grenadier came. I saw him take possession of house and yard without any ceremony. I saw him live jollily at the expense of his host, eat his bread, drink his wine, sleep in his bed, and smoke his pipes. I saw him, too, last night mercilessly drive the miller, with wife, child, and maid, from his home. I saw him fire a pistol at the fugitives, which mortally wounded the miller's innocent daughter. I accuse Hans Quäkenberger of all these crimes."

"I beg your pardon, gentlemen," the accused remarked, "but the Butterfly is speaking falsely."

"Produce the witnesses," the general ordered.

From a cave came forth the donkey, the hen, the cat, and the watchdog. Behind them a litter was carried, covered with a cloth, white and shining as freshly fallen snow.

"These are the persons," the judge said, "whom you ill-treated. Can you deny the facts?"

"Asking your pardon," the accused replied, "if this lazy donkey is a miller

this greedy hen a woman, this stealing cat a servant-maid, and this savage watchdog a miller's man—why, then, the spy of a butterfly was right, and you may condemn me according to the law. But I will ask every soldier whether he would allow himself to be trampled on, have his eyes pecked out, and his face scratched, without having a shot at his assailants?"

With furious glances the four witnesses sought to fall on the speaker, but were warned to be quiet.

"Take the cloth from the bier," the judge cried.

These orders were obeyed. On a bed of roses and rosemary lay the dove with outstretched wings and closed eyes, while a small red mark was visible on its head.

"Hans Quäkenberger, do you recognise this dove?" the judge asked him.

"Why, that is my dove—my own darling," he uttered, with a piercing shriek. Sobbing, he threw himself down by the side of the bier. "Oh, wretch that I am! unhappy man! now I feel you are not what you seem to be. I fancied at first sight of you that you were destined to be my heart's treasure. But now you are dead, and I am your murderer!"

He jumped up from the bier, tore open his coat, and said—

"Kill me, for I have deserved it."

A thick handkerchief was fastened over his eyes. Twelve dragoons stepped out and presented their carbines at him.

It was himself gave the word of command—"Fire!"

In the distance a cock was heard crowing, and a whirlwind appeared at the moment to pass through the air.

"Is that death?" our hero shouted, and tore the handkerchief from his eyes.

The first beam of the morning sun at this moment shone through the cleft in the rock. The court-martial, with all the dragoons, had disappeared, but he saw four people standing near him. It was the miller, with his wife, maid, and man. But before them, on a bed of roses and rosemary, lay the miller's daughter—a lovely girl, with closed eyes and pallid cheeks. A necklace of black beads was round her white neck, while a small red mark was apparent on her forehead.

Hans stood for a long time as in a dream.

A sunbeam played through the rocks and shone on the girl's pale cheeks. Beneath its blessed influence they began to grow ruddier and ruddier, till they paled the very roses on which she lay.

Hans had noticed that the sun had risen; but when the maiden opened her eyes, a sun rose before him destined to illumine his whole future life. He threw himself on the ground by her side, and kissed her ruddy lips. She sat up, and they gazed at each other fondly. It was the happiest moment of their lives.

At this moment the miller, with his wife, walked up to the pair, laid their hands in each other, and said—

"This is your bride who was destined for you, my brave fellow; for you have freed us all from the magic spell. We were on a bad road, but will now begin a new life."

Father, mother, and daughter hung with tears of joy round their saviour's neck.

They—Hans and the miller's lovely daughter—were betrothed, and all returned joyfully to the old mill. The once lazy miller became an industrious man; his greedy wife a liberal and hospitable woman; the maid never again stole in her whole life; while the savage man became quite peaceful. Soon after, the miller built a new mill close to the old one, and the people who spent in it the happiest possible life were no others than my hero and his wife.

If there be anybody so curious as not to be satisfied yet, but desirous to know how the miller's family came to be enchanted, I will oblige him.

The forest in which the mill was situated was under the government of Oberon, the king of the elves. Oberon had turned the guilty persons into animals as a punishment for their faults. But innocence had to suffer with them—such is too often the case in this world—as we have seen in the case of the dove. The charm could only be broken on a night of the full moon, if this faithful heart suffered death for the family from a loving hand, and if the man who mortally wounded the innocent being, expressed his readiness to give up his life for her sake,

For this purpose our hero was selected by the sportive elves. No one but a brave man would have endured the trials necessary to convert unhappy beings once again into happy mortals.

Whether Oberon and his fairy people showed themselves ever again to the happy beings either as dragoons, or in any other shape, I really cannot say; for happy people always see merry spirits, just as grumblers are ever tormented by ill-natured spirits; and so it will be to the world's

END.

FREEDOM OF OPINION.

It is an inconvenient thing for one whose inertness is willing to follow the example of the chameleon, and take the colour of the nearest object, to be surrounded by persons extreme in their opinions, or exaggerated in their qualities. I am unfortunate in having two intimate friends of natures so opposite, that were I to vary the tenor of my principles five hundred times a day, it would be impossible to harmonize with their alternate vagaries. Sir Josiah Crabbe is a gentleman grievously disposed to look upon the dark side of the things of this world. The spectacles through which he scrutinizes mankind and their doings are of dingy blue; and his axiom of *nil admirari* is so absolute, that I doubt whether the word "Good" ever issued, in an approbative sense, from his lips.

My friend Joe Ramble, on the other hand, is one of those provokingly good-humoured rattles whose high spirits put them in conceit even with things that ought to challenge criticism. The eye of poor Joe is not of that "curious" kind which delights to "quote deformity." He has an intuitive faculty for walking on the sunny side of the highways and byways of life. Everything seems to smile upon him, or rather *he* seems to smile upon everything. He cannot be made to believe that matters, public or private, ever go amiss. The throne, the government, the country—all are unexceptionable. He will not have the weather, that chartered scape-goat of English ill-humour, abused in his hearing. If the harvest be a bad one, so much the better for the farmers; if a good one, so much the better for the public.

Ramble is, in short, the most contented man alive. National, even to bigotry, he is persuaded that England is not only the greatest country in the world, but that, were all other countries to league against her, they would lose their time and trouble. Unconquerable, insubmergeable, she would still remain

Unhurt amid the war of elements,
The wreck of matter, and the crash of worlds.

I can encounter these two friends singly, whether as friends or antagonists. By humouring their vagaries, I keep them on good terms with themselves, and, consequently, with me. But when any unlucky circumstance brings them into col-

lision within the limits of my Diogenic tub, then comes the tug of war. And such a tug! Crabbe is loud and fractious; Ramble persevering and aggravating; and, as the bleat of a lamb will provoke an irritable dog to keep up his barking, Ramble's monosyllables have often the effect of worrying his adversary out of all Christian patience.

The other morning Sir Josiah was sitting with me in one of his ultra-acrimonious dispositions; railing against everything in the material or immaterial world;—the affairs of the East, the affairs of the West—the cabinet, the army, the navy, and all other professional and corporate bodies whose healths are drunk at public dinners.

I allowed the storm to roar itself still. Since it pleased him to assert that the times were out of joint, and since I felt unconscious of any power to mend them, I put on a look of sympathy, and was mum. When lo! just as I was beginning to feel as though a parish pall hung heavy upon my shoulders, in bounced my friend Ramble, his mottled cheeks distended by a smile, and his white teeth glistening like those of a pointer.

"Just arrived in England, my dear boy!" cried he; "only three hours landed at the Tower stairs!"

Sir Josiah (who seemed to resent his intrusion in such towering spirits, as a personal offence) looked as if he longed to inquire whether poor Joe had travelled on the broad grin all the way from France.

"*Here's* comfort!" resumed Ramble, rolling forward to the fireside the arm-chair in which he ensconced himself, to the discomposure of my previous guest. "Here's what enables one to defy winter, death, and the doctors! A good sea-coal fire—a glorious English fireside!"

"I have always understood, sir," replied Crabbe—to whom he seemed to be addressing himself for confirmation—"that there was nothing more unwholesome on earth than a sea-coal fire. To say nothing of the cursed sulphur which turns everything black in the room (even one's temper), to say nothing of the filthy gases emitted, of which, not being a chemist, I am incompetent to speak (and I wish I were also incompetent to smell), there can be no doubt that innumerable lives are annually sacrificed in England to our mad habit of roasting ourselves half

the morning before the bars of a grate, as a preparative for confronting the severity of the most infernal climate on the face of the habitable globe."

"Climate, my dear sir?" cried Ramble—"climate? Don't talk to me about the merit of foreign climates! I've just come from Nice, where I was shrivelled up like a dead leaf with the bise. I spent the spring in Constantinople where it snowed half the time and rained t'other; and I am now enabled to assert from experience, what I have often heard advanced by travelled men, that England has the best, that is, the most enjoyable climate, in the universal world. You are neither scorched and dried up, as in the south, nor mildewed as in the north—nor——"

Crabbe, who had been shrugging his shoulders impatiently for some moments, now burst out with—"There is some difference between being roasted to rags, sir, and not warmed through! The question of the English climate is sufficiently set at rest by the masses of green fruit one sees piled in our markets, in our streets, at our very tables—an effectual check against undue increase of population! It sets one's teeth on edge to think of it!"

"Well, well, so long as our harvests are abundant we may dispense with a few plums and peaches!" cried Ramble. "And nature has, at least, provided us with the means of bidding defiance to the weather. Look at this admirable fire," cried he, starting up and placing himself before it, in precisely such an attitude as to prevent our complying with his request. "I look upon an Englishman's hearth as the pædium of national glory. I look upon our firesides as the instigators of our domestic happiness, as the reward of our domestic virtues!"

"And I," cried Crabbe, whose temper, albeit the glowing grate was in eclipse, was rising to fever heat—"I look upon an English fireside as the bane of all national prosperity—as the clog upon all national progress—as the screen of our inertness—the pretext for our incapacity—the hot-bed of our selfishness, vulgarity, and pride. The pretended comfort of our fireside is the motive adduced for closing ourselves up, evening after evening, within our own doors, to the extinction of all social intercourse: and, consequently, to the suppression of all the more expansive impulses of the human soul. While other civilized nations delight in the intercom-

munication which forwards the interests of the arts, the sciences, the public weal, an Englishman holds it a certificate of merit that, after muddling his brains with heady port, he can potter away his evening over the fire, muddling his affections with the twaddle of his wife and daughters, as they yawn over their carpet work or sewing. What effort does such a man make, sir, to improve their understanding or his own?"

"I don't see why he should not make an effort," remonstrated Ramble. "He might read aloud instructive books."

"Ay, and put them to sleep before bedtime," interrupted Crabbe.

"He might direct the conversation to subjects of popular interest."

"Which the misses would cut short by talking of a new stitch! Whereas, were it not for the attraction of that accursed fireside, over which he has coddled himself from boyhood till he has secured a rheumatism from every casual encounter of the night air, he would take his young people into the society of those of their own age, to the improvement of their spirits and intellects, and the encouragement of those friendships and connexions which are to cheer their progress through life. An Englishman does little or nothing for the cultivation of acquaintanceship. He thinks it enough for the happiness of his family that he cherishes one or two old bores of friends; who entertain, word for word, and blunder for blunder, the same opinions as himself. It is his favourite boast that he don't care about the world. He swears, on every fresh invitation, that he hates large parties; which being interpreted, means that he is snugger in his own home, where he can engross the whole fireside, and lay down the law, than in a more extended circle, where he must share with other people his consequence and right of shibroiling."

"Well, I must still confess myself on that point a John Bull," cried Ramble, shaking up his feathers, and looking as if he had said a fine thing, and was proud of himself.

"Nobody doubts you, sir; and you are in the majority—you are decidedly in the majority!" cried Sir Josiah. "For my part, I wish to interfere with no man's pleasures or pursuits. I only permit myself to despise them!"

"I fancy I shall have most people on my side when I say that a good fire on a winter's evening is not so very despic-

ble!" cried Ramble, rubbing his hands, with a chuckle. "A commodious drawing-room, within an Axminster carpet, well-lined curtains, closely drawn in the rear—on one side a smoking tea-table, on the other a handsome, sprightly woman, and in front a fine, clear, bright, glowing fire, constitutes my notion of comfort; and I challenge life to produce anything tending more completely to the promotion of human happiness."

Poor Joe now looked so provokingly triumphant, that Sir Josiah could scarcely contain himself.

"A pretty description," cried he, "of the paradise of a northern imagination! Instead of seeking the interchange of mind enjoyable in a large assemblage of rational beings, the Englishman makes it an article of religion to lose himself in inglorious sensuality. With us selfishness is amplified into a partnership concern. What is called the domestic happiness of England, is only a double-bodied egotism."

"Every country has its customs," argued Ramble, undiscouraged. "The English are not a gregarious people. In France, politics and the theatres tend to the creation of masses. People meet at cafés to read the newspapers, or seek excitement in the throng of theatres; but in every instance this results from the absence of domestic affections, or the want of domestic comforts. The marriage of a foreigner is the result of a family engagement, not of preference; and as to his home, with draughts of air streaming through every door and window, and a couple of smouldering logs substituted for a fine glowing mass of ignited matter that sends warmth into the depths of one's heart—what has it to boast that need detain him from the chattering mob of assemblies, or the false glare of a theatre?"

"Nothing, certainly! And the consequence is, that he has become more intelligent, more refined, more independent, than ourselves. Which capital, pray, is progressing most rapidly? Where are the arts most cultivated? Where are the sciences most encouraged? Whence do we borrow our elegant inventions—our lessons of taste—the tone of our public amusements—the mode of all we eat, wear, sing, dance, or assume in the way of personal or social embellishments? From the Continent, sir! from the Continent, which is not too much engrossed in warming its shins to neglect its powers of invention. From the Continent, which,

as it does not station itself with its coat-flaps in its hands before the fireplace, is not brutalized out of all refinement of soul or elegance of manners! Because we have accustomed our cuticles to this unnatural vitrification, are the great bonds of society, pray, to be loosed? Is there to be none of that expanded fellowship of intellect from whence arises the great regeneration of the species—the grand elevation of national motives—the cheering prospect of national glory? Rather let the wisdom of Parliament buy up the infernal reserves of Staffordshire and Newcastle, and freeze us into the necessity of congregating together for the sake of bodily warmth!"

"Upon my life, I can't conceive what we want more, in the way of association, than we now enjoy," cried Ramble. "Professional men pass their mornings in social communications——"

"For the despatch of business! An Englishman will do anything for the good of the shop."

"Then Parliament brings together nightly, eight months of the year, a vast proportion of the most intelligent of the community."

"Still, for what *they* pretend to call despatch of business—that is, for the purpose of talking about despatching it."

"The clubs, then—look at the clubs of London."

"The clubs!" cried the pessimist; "talk of the *clubs* in the way of social intercourse! For what were they instituted, pray, but that the Englishman's fireside might be permanently ex-domesticated, in a spot where the claims of civilization are altogether abolished? A spot where the fireside is secure from petticoat participation—a special mart of social egotism—an association for the encouragement of selfishness. Since the establishment of clubs, which, instead of forwarding cheerful intercommunication with his fellow-creatures, a man of what is called good company frequents for the enjoyment of his newspaper, his cigar, or his solitary meal—the theatres, concert-rooms, coteries, and all other places of public entertainment have been deserted, or, rather, bequeathed to the exclusive use of the weaker moiety of the human race. And why? Because, sir, these clubs are an institution founded on the same paltry system of fireside enjoyment—an enlarged edition of the Englishman's fireside—the Englishman's *confounded* fireside!"

"Still," persisted Ramble (in the provoking little *fillet de voix* which Molière ascribes to *la raison*), "you must admit that, however John Bull's intelligence may have been deteriorated by it, the domestic fireside constitutes the cradle of his virtues——"

"Curse on his virtues!—they've undone his country!"

cried Sir Josiah, in the phrase applied by Addison to Cato, and by a modern moralist to George III.

"Nevertheless, I think I could prove

to you," persisted Ramble, with undisturbed equanimity, "that what you have advanced——"

He was interrupted by a violent slam of the door. While the optimist was caressing his legs, and admiring the set of his boots, the pessimist had shaken hands with me and departed, leaving the smiling Joe in undisturbed possession of the hearthrug—in that characteristic and uncereemonious attitude of self-indulgence which has become typical from one end of Europe to the other of—"The Englishman's Fireside."

THE BLEEDING HEART.

From the German of VOGL.

"AND hast thou then wounded so deeply my heart,
Thou beautiful maiden so dear?
O heal it again, love! but let it be soon,
'Twill break else for sorrow, I fear!"

But the maiden shook laughing her ringlets so fair,
And said, "O you poor foolish youth,
How can I your wishes fulfil, since you know
That I long since have plighted my troth?"

"And hast thou then lightly, and only in jest,
Thus wounded my heart? In return,
I pray that thy bosom, O never may know
All the anguish with which I now burn!"

With heart sorely bleeding the youth rush'd away,
His eye bitter weeping, he flew;
And wander'd through street after street, till he came
To the house of a doctor he knew.

And when at the house he had quickly arrived,
He said to the old man, "O cure
My bleeding and suffering heart; for such pain
I no longer, alas! can endure."

The doctor replied, as he shook his gray head,
"Foor boy, thou canst leave me alone!
Though remedies many for pains I have foud,
For this one, alone, have I none!"

And once more the youth wander'd sadly away,
So inwardly gloomy and dull;
He wander'd through street after street, till he came
To the churchyard so quiet and full.

And as in the churchyard he silently stood,
The sexton was digging a grave;
"O canst thou not heal my poor suffering heart?
O sexton, thy kind help I crave!"

Then he, sadly smiling, nods slowly his head,
And says, "Just step in; therē you'll see,
If I throw a few shovels of earth in, how soon
From your heartache and pain you'll be free!"

JOHN DAMPER.

A TALE OF A WET BLANKET.

"Do give that poor woman a penny, papa," said a little boy of about five years of age to an old man with whom he was walking some sixty years ago in one of the suburban districts. "Begone to your parish, woman," said the old man, turning to the beggar, who was soliciting alms in the high road; "and, John, my child, never give anything away without you are sure of getting something more in return. I never have through life." Ere the child had time for reply, the old man stopped suddenly before a small detached house, the shutters of which, from top to bottom, were closed, and its doorway occupied by those sad decorations of the "vampire of life"—"Mutes." The old man eyed the "hired emblems of sorrow" for a few seconds with something akin to astonishment, and in an under tone soliloquized—"Dead! God bless me, it is shocking! so sudden, too, and full ten years younger than myself. Wife and child beggars, of course; it always comes to this. A man who marries badly is sure to die a beggar. It is a pity, too, that I did not know he was so near it. God bless me, ten years my junior! poor —, but it was his own fault, and thank goodness I am not accountable for other men's actions."

The sad procession made its appearance. The old man watched its snail-like progress with a tremor which showed how fearfully he felt the unbusiness-like habits of that great matter-of-fact visitant—death, who interrupts man in the busiest hour of his career. And turning to the boy with a convulsive movement of his frame, as if endeavouring to take an ideal leap out of himself, impressively said,

"See, boy, what poverty brings people to."

"Wouldn't they have put poor 'Uncle Joe' in the 'pit-hole' if he had not been poor?" earnestly asked the child.

"No, my boy; or, at least, not yet, for he was not so old as I am; and when they did, he would have left money behind him, and his family would have been sorry for him, for the good he had done them, as you will be for me when I die."

"Won't they love him, then, because he went into the nasty 'pit-hole' without leaving them any money, papa?"

"No, my boy; money makes love, and keeps it alive afterwards."

"Do not great rich men go in the 'pit-hole,' papa?"

"Sometimes, my boy; but that is when they are tired of living, and wish to make room for somebody else, who is sure to love them for all the money they leave behind them. No; rich men do not die so soon as poor men."

"But nurse says, 'everybody goes in the pit-hole,' papa."

"So they do, boy; but the poor die in a workhouse, which is much worse than only dying."

"Is the workhouse, then, the naughty place nurse tells me bad boys will go to?"

"No, my boy; but it is where they put poor people, and where you will be put if you do not save your money."

"Oh!" said the child; and the first mesh was woven in the entangled web of his future life—a dread idea formed from a commingling of poverty, death, and workhouse; it was the *tria juncta in uno* out of which was to grow the luxuriant tree of misery, which should shade his future life from the glowing sun of hope and happiness. The child was in the holiest and most sacred season of his life—the waxen age of first impressions. The old man's words had fallen deeply in his plastic mind—the seed was sown for the germination of ideas, good or bad—the embouchure of his future mental existence was ignited, perhaps like an interminable train of touch-paper, to smoulder to eternity.

The object of the old man's visit to the scene of mourning is soon told. He (Nathaniel Damper) was a rich tradesman. His deceased brother, some few years before, had married against the elder brother's wish, and, consequently, they had never been since upon more friendly terms than that of employer and employed (for being necessary to his business, the elder had retained Joe's services). A long and serious illness had kept the latter absent from business at a time when he happened to have some important trade books in his possession, which he had taken to his home to "make up," and it was to recover these that the old man visited the house of trouble.

On her return from her last sad duties to her husband, much to her surprise, and not a little to her indignation, at the thirteenth hour—that hour which passeth hope—the widow found her nephew and brother-in-law seated in her little parlour. In the chaos of her bereavement, his appearance came upon her as the type of angry feelings. For a few moments, and but for a few, bitter was the conflict that raged within her truly feminine bosom; but her heart was too full of anguish to hold enmity, though its beau-ideal stood before her; and she sat in silent sorrow. What will not silent suffering do? The matter-of-fact old tradesman was abashed in the recent abode of the great master of his own moving principle, death, who had now for the first time become his near neighbour. The hardest heart must not only bend before the grim monarch, but at its very contemplation. The old man understood no other sympathy but that of the purse-strings—he could offer nothing more than money. This he did, and, in addition, left his son under the widow's care, with a promise of liberal payment. Old Damper never gave something for nothing, though the gift were clothed in the garb of charity.

A long illness and meagre means had well watered the bitter weed of poverty in that little home; it grew from the centre of its foundation, and cast its shadow in every nook. It had, with the strength of a giant, torn up by its roots every emblem of comfort. Plate, books, furniture, all were gone. The old man had often pointed out to the child the theory of want, but this was an opportunity not to be lost of illustrating his theory with a practical example, and, therefore, when the widow had left the room, he once more expatiated upon the curse of poverty, fearfully impressing it upon the child's mind; the impression was not slight, it formed the subject-matter of his dreams that night.

Reader, do you remember dreaming in your childhood, when the world stood before you in its fresh morning mantle, unsoiled with care spots? Didst ever go to bed weary and worn, in company with that seedling of insanity, *one fixed idea*, an indefinite dread; an unaccountable horror of a vague expectancy, when the perturbed mind wedges open the languid eyelids? That night the poor boy's whole senses were in the torturing, but giant's grasp, of one fixed idea; how he hammered thought after thought at it with

the hope of rendering it malleable; but no, his mental powers became bewildered in a chaotic whirlwind. Monsters stood before him, hideously grinning and making frightful grimaces. He hid his head under the bed-clothes, but there again stood the skeleton poverty, staring at him with large soulless eyes, and pointing its haggard finger at his breast, as if intimating that it would tear every happy hope of childhood from his bosom. Then, how he tried to shut out the phantasms from his sight by plunging to very agony his fingers into his eyes; then the demon took another form, he arose in beautiful little concentric circles, painted in as many colours as the rainbow. The colours were a relief; the boy took courage, his mind felt calmer, but the circles began expanding, and grew till they were as large as worlds, and the figure again came, but it was in Lilliputian stature; and as he travelled gradually up what seemed to be the inside of a huge cone, painted with burning circlets of many-hued fire, he grew larger and larger. The boy shrank, the perspiration rolled from his forehead, he tried to shriek for his parent, but he was tongue-tied. Nature became exhausted, and he swooned away the rest of the night. The next morning he was delirious, in high fever. The father came, a physician with him. The old man was enraged with the widow; it must have been her fault; the bed could not have been aired; she must have put him in damp sheets, or "*wet blankets*," suggested the physician. The "*murder came out*;" her previous day's trouble had caused the widow to omit the proper airing. The boy had slept in a wet blanket; the physician knew it. "It was not the first time in his practice that he had met with such a case;" the child would be subject to internal shiverings all the rest of his life. Nature herself could scarcely remedy the effects produced upon children by having wet blankets around them.

* * * * *

Forty years since, in one of the leading streets at the west end of the town, might have been seen a newly-painted house and shop; its window was filled with innumerable cards, upon which were affixed every imaginable pattern of button, from plain polished brass to silver-gilt. The inside of the shop was well stocked with swords, buttons, and military ornaments, everything looking bright and new. Over the shop-door, in bright gold letters, was "John Damper, late Zetterquist, Military

Ornament Manufacturer," and there at his desk sat John Damper, just started on the road of life, ready and prepared to drive with all his might and main to that young tradesman's "Utopia," independence.

During old Zetterquist's occupancy, London could not boast a happier workshop, and many of its tenants, who had toiled for ten or twenty years, began to look upon it as snug and secure as a Government office, their hands ever oiled with good-heartedness; both master and men had plodded on together in the same interest. But with John Damper came its blight, for as fast as Zetterquist ran away from faults the former galloped after them; John held that, to make men work, there was nothing like flogging them well with a forty-tongued power of grumbling, and he grumbled from his very heart, which was like a huge tank of cold water, from which ideas, clothed in words of ice, were ever flowing.

The new master had not been long installed ere a sullen gloom fell over the spirits of his men, the disease was contagious (selfishness ever is), they emulated the spirit of their employer; they worked purely for *themselves*; they toiled round the wheel of time for the simple purpose of producing "Saturday nights." Orders became less frequent; the work worse in quality; the business did not seem to go on so well as it ought to have done; but then, John could not have been disappointed, for he had augured failure from the first. It was the second winding-sheet of his prospects hanging over him; but John was young, and though blighted in his seedling and his spring-tide, might yet sow his future path with hopes.

Notwithstanding that John had no faith in matrimony, believing as he did, that wives were nothing but troublesome absorbents of "petty cash," he caused himself (for he was too cold to do such an unbusiness-like thing of his own free will) to be united to a lady, out of whom he hoped to hew a tolerably efficient housekeeper; and, with her, John had got a bargain, that had gone at a great sacrifice. The union was a junction of contraries; she was a perfect little vessel of happiness, built by Nature to float in the sunny calms of a fond heart; but, steered by her father (a worldly helmsman) into a frozen sea, towed by avarice into the frigid latitude of John's bosom, to become prematurely ice-bound.

The busy wing of time fluttered, and Nature had breveted John to the rank of parent, and 'twas a mere brevet, for, when congratulated, he would merely observe that he had another mouth to feed; the obliquity of his mental vision prevented his seeing that he had another brain to develope, a mind to form, a human soul to keep steady in the direct path of immortality.

"Do you know, John, I really think our little darling is the healthiest baby ever born," said the lady, some few months after the birth, playfully tossing the child before her husband.

"Don't believe it, Kate. Babies are never safe; they all have a large stock of diseases inside, which they let out one at a time, and ever when you can least afford it. They are a pest to everybody but the doctors, who half live upon them."

"Oh, don't say so, John; and how cruel of you, when you know the dear little fellow has not had an hour's illness since his birth."

"No, he has not, but he will have; so 'do not count your chickens before they are hatched.' I think he is sickening for the measles even now, and if he is not, you know he must cut his teeth, that is certain."

"John, dear, do not mention the horrid teething; but he'll get through it well, I know he will, the dear little fellow," said the alarmed mother, tears starting in her eyes.

"Well, perhaps he will, Kate; but you know Mrs. Jones's last cut its teeth in convulsions; talk of his being so healthy, I only wish there was an office in London where I could insure my pocket and my night's rest against the inroads of the hooping-cough, which he is sure to have."

"John, now don't be cross; the dear child will live to repay us for our trouble, he will grow up to bless the evening of our days."

"He need not hurry himself to do that, Kate, as I would prefer having a good long morning. You know 'a bird in the hand is worth two in a bush,' and I have no ambition to see a second edition of my own manhood in circulation before the first has been thoroughly worn out. Another thing, Kate, think how badly and wild half the young men turn out." And thus ever did John poison the sweet waters of hope with the sour spirit of despondency; but, as yet, it had not adulterated the purity of his wife's heart, and she coaxingly said—

"I think, my dear, we had better, for the first time since our wedding-day, ask a few friends to the christening."

"I think not, Kate. I have no pleasure in feasting other people. I shall live to want all for myself."

By suggesting Mr. Timothy Tubbs, a wealthy brewer, as the god-papa of the forthcoming christening, and thereupon erecting a few atmospheric mansions, such as insinuating the probability of that gentleman's taking a liking to the child, and making him his heir, and also the possibility of the old gentleman being induced to place a little of his spare capital in John's business, Mrs. Damper, however, gained her point.

The day arrived, the old brewer was brimming over with good spirits, and full of jokes. John was unusually buoyant. That day was a strange epoch in John's life; bright, though sciolous scintillations gleamed from his hopeless disposition; it was a small opening in his life through which he could catch, for the first time, a glimpse of life's rational path, lighted with radiant joy, and dotted on either side, though perhaps among brambles, with little constellations of hope; but, alas! it was transient (in such dispositions it always is). The light of hope was too dazzling for his dark-habituated mind. A film was before his mental vision; the curtain which had fallen before the foot-lights of his childhood, dropped and changed once more the flickerings of happiness into smouldering vapid smoke.

"Isn't he a delightful little darling now, John?" said the fond mother. "Why, there's not such another 'poppet' in the world."

"I can't believe that," replied the literal papa. "For my own part, I think if all the London infants were well mixed together in a bag, and then dropped out into the middle of Hyde Park, they are so much alike that I don't believe their own mothers would know their own; and I don't think that would make much difference in the long run, so long as every mother got one of some kind."

"A huge mistake, Damper," interrupted the brewer. "Babies, like Bra-mah's locks, are patented, and all separately registered, so that no strange key will pick the lock of their affections; like their own mothers' well-known features and voice, both of which are fitted into the wards of their hearts from birth."

"Well, well, it may be so; but for my part I don't like children, perhaps I wish

I could; but they seem all alike—pretty, but stupid," was the amiable rejoinder.

"Don't like babies, indeed; a pretty old fool I am to be childless when I ought to have had a son walking through life by my side, and profiting by my experience."

"But," replied John, "what trouble they give when they grow into wild extravagant young men."

"Bah—" was the only reply—and John Damper had lost another friend—the anticipated advance of capital had been swept away from the brewer's mental promissory note-book by that bah.

I could have loved that child, thought the brewer, as he walked home that night; but one might as well set about loving an infant savage, for savage he will be—he won't be able to help it. I know he won't. I know what example is. No, no, no hydropathy for me. I'll not wrap my heart in a wet blanket; if it is to be tossed from its usual idolatry to my bachelor-self, it shall at least be in a dry one; and thus the first stone of young Damper's future prospects became mildewed as soon as laid, by his father's humid disposition.

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Another trundle at the hoop of time, and John had become the father of a family, which, like a vine, required but the tender hand of affection and encouragement, to have made it cling around the walls; and affixing itself in the interstices of his heart, growing each day in exuberance, until the shade of its luxuriant branches would have formed an arbour for the peace-rest of his old age. But, if his boy came bouncing home from school with a mind bent upon deserving the praises which his tutor had poured upon his o'erflowing grateful heart, his frigid papa would encourage him with a "hope that the next copy would be better." If the schoolmaster congratulated the parent upon his son's improvement in writing, the reply would be, "Ah, yes, he has a natural talent for it; he could scribble well when quite a baby." Mr. Damper possessed an extraordinary talent for contradiction; he so tripped up the heels of affirmatives with negatives, and *vice versa*, that he made it quite a science. It was the science of working out his own prophecies by a self-created machinery of opposition, the wheels of which were ever entangling and crushing every project, moral or physical, his mind gave birth to. John was right, the boy never did learn, his mental powers were warped with the

hot winds of discouragement, and he left school with a crude chaotic mass of indigested school-learning.

In his home, that foundation-stone upon the proper regulation of which depends the fabric of fortune, our hero was no more successful. At meal-times the Damper family circle bore a strong resemblance to a set of hungry automatons, acting dumb-motional requiems at the disappearance of every mouthful. If the children laughed or talked, John "could not endure such rudeness;" if silent, "he hated sulky children;" and would tell his wife "to look at Jones's family, and see how well-behaved *they* were." If at any time he caught the children emptying the jovial fulness of their young hearts in merriment, he would commentate upon the probability of the world's soon showering upon their risible faculties, lachrymal occasions that would make the former hiss like red-hot iron against an icicle.

John Damper had ever considered his children a trouble to him, and nature, as if to the assistance of his evil spirit, breathed across his hearth a blast colder than his own frozen disposition, nipping his household buds, and wafting their gentle spirits to their last (and really first) long home. The shadow of death hung over his house, but it moved not John—he said, "he expected it; the other would go soon, or live to torment him." This sad occurrence was stock-in-trade to him, and for the future, when any acquaintance with proud paternal fondness boasted of his younglings, he would tell him *par parenthèse*, that he had just *buried* three, with as much *sang froid* as if communicating information of a recent purchase in the "three per cents."

His once merry little sanguine wife, in spirits as buoyant and in temper as elastic as an india-rubber ball, had become spiritless; the drippings from the wet blanket had nearly made her heart a petrification to her husband. So often had the cup of hope eluded her lips, that she became careless, listless, and it at last fell entirely from her grasp, shivering to a thousand atoms, and she fell headlong, headlong over the pieces, dragging with her even the shadow of prosperity. The jewel of domestic happiness—that little pivot, concord—upon which ever revolves the wheel of prosperity, and which is often the amalgamator of the "likings of the unlike," is sometimes so steeped in vinegar during the first moon of connubiality, that its progress is stopped at once; at

others, like stern old walls, which are ruined by the preying of birds upon their fastenings, it is pecked to pieces, and it is years before it falls in ruin. The latter was the case with the Damper couple; for a statelier little breastwork of happiness, behind which he might have set at defiance the storms of the world, no man ever had than John Damper; but he had pecked and pecked with his hungry dissatisfied disposition, making breach after breach, until it had become a mere wreck.

Of his four children but one lived, and even he withered as he grew, for every bud of hope, long ere it could blossom into reality, was nipped, and would have died too, had it not been uprooted from the parental stem. When a baby he had been a pest; in boyhood, a plaything; and as he ripened into manhood before the distempered vision of his parent, he appeared in the shape of a rival. Did he ask for one profession he was played with, permitted to construe silence into consent, till he had pictured to himself, in sanguine colours, a prosperous future on the stage of life; when lo! the prospect darkened, and the wet blanket interposed itself. It could not be afforded! If another, it could not be listened to. He was told that he was fit for nothing. Old Time kept shaking the sand from his glass, and young Damper fell through his minority that most unfortunate of mortals, "a man without a profession;" and the web of John's disposition had entangled another of his own predictions—his son *had not* turned out well. The young man had inherited his mother's sanguineous but gentle temperament; his young and buoyant spirit had been chained with promethean bonds; an electric spark of kindness from an extraneous friend lighted a flame of gentle but firm resistance in his bosom; and he left his home, and for a year afterwards the parent heard not of him, when, like a thunder-clap, the news came upon him, that his boy's protector having died suddenly, he had joined a hair-brained military expedition, and had fallen. To the father the sad news amalgamated itself with some other losses of a pecuniary nature, which he suffered at the time; the dark cloud embosoming future thunder merely hung over him; the shock was to come at some future time. To the mother it was a shock which vibrated through her heart, and was followed by a flash of indignation at her husband's coolness, which rent asunder the last tie remaining of her earlier affec-

tion; for she *had* commenced her married life with, at least, an ideal ceremony of loving, and for a time sustained it with all her soul's strength, outpouring the bright invisible fluid from the heaven of her bosom; but it fell upon the cold, heart-shaped stone which tenanted her husband's bosom, each drop being greedily absorbed each year as it rolled through space, taking up a mass of atomic bickerings, until there arose between them a time-hardened and petrified encrustation of hatred.

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Two years more had become chronicled on the roll of the bygone, and John began to have an inkling that a man who enters the world with a presentiment of poverty, like him who starts upon the first round of the ladder of life with a determination to grapple with the topmost, is certain of realizing the greater portion, if not the whole of his fixed idea. A new establishment in the same trade, worked with hopeful hearts, and in accordance with the spirit of the times, destroyed John Damper's business, cutting in twain the extremities which supported it; his best workmen went to the new house for better wages and kinder treatment, and his best customers left him for better and cheaper goods, and Damper fell into the *Gazette*; and did he *then* regret his wanton hewing down of that pillar of prosperity, the firmest supporter of the falling—an affectionate wife? No: he regarded her still as the fatal axe which had stricken the tree of his life's success. It was his idiosyncrasy.

His property was sold. The day of his ejection from his home happened on the fortieth anniversary of his wedding day. Strange chance, emblematic of that fate which ever moves along the undercurrent of human life. With the tenacity of humanity for familiar scenes—on that day John entered the counting-house in bitter and regretting misery, and stood resting his head upon his desk in lingering meditation, till the dark life-long bubbles which had haunted him, boiled into a burning surge of suicidal thought, terrifically beating against his better manhood.

The door moved slowly upon its hinges, and like an angel of hope in the hour of trouble, his wife, she—the broken-spirited—stood by his side, the rustling of her dress aroused, perhaps, saved him. Damper started, his fists were clenched, his lips were livid with rage, and with voice of thunder, he said, "You! you here, who have brought this ruin upon

me. Begone to your friends, to those who have supported and kept you away from your husband whilst on the very verge of ruin."

"I am here now when all have left you. That heaven, John, which in its omnipotence can save—can also extricate from ruin. While there is life, there is hope. I am that hope."

"Cant, woman! cant, I say; begone, and leave me ere you madden me. I hate you!"

"I—" and as the angry reply was midway between her lips, and her eyes were flashing with indignation, she glanced upon the little date-remembrancer which hung in the counting-house, indicating the date of the month. It was the representative of that recorded by her marriage register. She gazed for a moment, and her ireful flashes became softened, diluted with the gushings of heart-molten anguish; the history of her life was written in those figures; quickly as the thought of deity a glimmering of past happiness flashed through time, and the good monitor, memory, had done its work. The more than human, the *christian* woman, with forgetful forgivingness, in true and holy womanhood sank upon her knees. The quietest of all answerers, memory, had spoken, and wrath was turned from her gentle bosom, and pointing her spare finger at the remembrancer, emphatically, but with a voice of pain steeped in honey, uttered, "John, John, let's keep *it* holy for once." The angry man, the contemplating suicide, shook: his frame became convulsed—a burning fire was in his breast—and turning his eyes to where she pointed, he became wrapped in the spirit of the past; "the ought to have been," and the "might have been," even as dark outshadows light, stood out in beauteous relief, outpainting the wet blanketism of his vision with memory; he gazed at the remembrancer, and like a big dew-drop, a tear, one solitary tear, started from his eye; it was the harbinger of hope sent from a reformed heart; the messenger of the great God of peace to his bosom; a shower followed, and he was relieved; he bent—those knees that were never bent before for that sacred purpose, now touched the ground; both husband and wife were kneeling; burning tears fell in silence from both, commingling, distilling a vapour of love, a fit offering to the offended angel of content, who stood with his beauteous hand, moving film after film from John's hitherto diseased vision.

"Kate, dear Kate!" he could say no more, his o'ercharged heart near burst.

"John, love me now;" those tones wrung from his long-soiled heart its black spots, leaving it pure as in his earliest childhood, ere the wet blanket had enwrapped it in its chilling folds.

The rush of new ideas from the fountains of hope were too much for Damper's weakened brain; the sickness of joy was upon him, and a long and severe brain fever succeeded to his second, but only real, wedding. His wife had taken him to a new and pretty home; whose, he knew not. For the first time in his manhood, John was dangerously ill; and now bereft of fortune and friends, and even prospects, he began to feel little dartings of hope pass through his troubled heart. His despondency had passed its climax, and he was re-naturalized; the newly-discovered knowledge that *his much-injured wife was his only friend* having once beaten itself into his soul, pioneered the way for others. In grateful ignorance, much did he strain his mind to discover the friends who were supporting him in his forlornness; and when told it was his creditors—those who he had so often averred "never did something for nothing"—how his astonished heart beat, and in its vibrations shook heaps of prejudice from the wall which had so antagonistically guarded it from sympathy with his species. When John arose from that bed of illness, it was as a new man; he felt himself almost wafted along the streets, so inflated was his heart with his new spirit, gratitude. How could he longer live upon his kind friends? He must press upon them one more favour, viz., to procure him an engagement—the means of supporting his now beloved wife. What resolutions he made to look for and pick up every little particle of felicity; and, oh! how bitterly he felt now the misery of being childless; had but his noble-minded son been in existence, how he would have idolized him. How painfully vivid was the remembrance of the many times the cup of happiness had been held to his lips, and what torments of retribution he was now enduring for the wantonness with which he had ever dashed it from him; but the great teachers in the business of life, experience and suffering, were working his cure.

Shortly after his convalescence, John sat in his little breakfast parlour, awaiting the appearance of his wife; he had never felt so happy; he was about relieving his heart of an accumulation of gratitude, for that day he intended calling upon his

unexpected creditor-friends, who his wife had insinuated had supported them both. With a light and merry step she entered the room, placing the little remembrancer on the table, but with the card turned from John.

"Kate," said the husband, "will you never be tired of that stupid little tell-tale?"

"Can I tire of that which has been the means of restoring to me, in the fall of life, the husband of my youth—the true *elixir vitæ*, love. Tire, John?—and of that dear little phrenotypic which called up a sparkling of happy memories, and thrust two estranged hearts against each other with such providential suddenness, that the faults which obstructed their union fell from both, leaving the purer parts like meeting globules of quicksilver, to combine and become one holy one."

What a mine had John sprung for the first time in his old age. The Sacramento of his existence—the golden valley of life—was open before him, with an angel for a guide, in his wife. His heart was full; and so tenaciously did it hold its happy and new-born contents, that "thank Heaven" was all he could ejaculate; and John, notwithstanding his poverty, felt rich in manhood. Like a diamond set in clay, is hope or gratitude embedded in poverty.

"John," said his wife, breaking silence, "it is within a few minutes of ten o'clock. When the hour has reached its full, you shall look upon the bright side of that remembrancer, which has done so much towards exhibiting to you the bright side of life."

John was once more a child; his curiosity became painfully aroused. What new pleasure could be buried in the womb of time that could interest him? and never did speculator in the terrestrial gaming regions of Pluto hang with greater suspense over the turning of a card. The time elapsed, the card was turned; the sight made his brain dizzy. The tumultuous current flowed from his heart, filling its venous canals to repletion. The big blue veins in his forehead became knotted with excitement, and he grasped the table for support. The 1st of June stood chronicled, nay, arrayed like a reproving fiend before him. The saddest epoch in his life, like a ghost from the tomb of the past, stood typical of an irretrievable loss before him in the bright daylight of his present. An avalanche of remembrances rushed over him; every nook in his breast, every action of

his past life, attended by its motive power, as closely as is the electric fluid by its thunder, stood before him. For a moment he regarded his wife almost vindictively, as if undergoing a relapse; then suddenly uttered, "Great Heaven, Kate, Kate—why this wanton cruelty—why so painfully call to my memory the day upon which he was given me? Have I not suffered enough? Dead, dead! Oh! how bitterly I feel his loss in the remembrance of his birth. I do, Kate. Then taunt me not with his death. I—I know I have killed him. Now are you satisfied?" And the man, yet weak in his virtues because of their fresh newness, swooned.

The poor wife became alarmed. She had dragged him to the very brink of the steepest abyss of misery, that he might with the greater ecstasy gaze upon unexpected, un hoped-for happiness; but she feared for the result of her experiment, and in agonizing suspense hung over him, awaiting his return to reason. "John;" and the soft tones of her voice aroused him. His eyes wandered round the room, and he thickly uttered, "Where is he—dead, dead!"

"Thank Heaven, my dear husband, our poor boy——" "Is here," said a young man, entering the room, grasping his father with both hands—"here, to make you both once more prosperous, and, at last, happy." For a minute the man could not speak, but his heart leaped upon his tongue, and, with tears of joy rolling down his face, he uttered, "My boy, my boy! God bless you. I see it all, Kate, Kate; my new-made bride, you are an angel."

And if Time had laboured half a century for the express purpose of out-mastering its own productions, and producing a chef-d'œuvre of happy days for the ushering in of John's new existence, it could not more have out-happied happiness. John was inebriate with joy; he not only saw pleasure in everything and everybody, but he saw it all double. The rest of that day was devoted to explanations and the reiteration of explanations, and which we will now in a few words offer to the reader.

The old brewer, who had long witnessed the boy's sufferings, at last induced him to leave his parent, and adopted him as his own son. The young man became passionately attached to a young lady, a distant relative of his adopted parent, and, having Mr. Tubbs's sanction, they were about being united, but a few weeks prior to the appointed wedding-day the

lady fell a victim to consumption, and young Damper solicited and received the permission of his old friend to assuage his heartfelt sorrow with travel. Unknown to the brewer, when abroad, the high-spirited young man joined a military expedition; and rumour, who invariably demonstrates events by the first rule in arithmetic, carried to his parents the account of his death. Shortly after the young man's departure from England, the brewer died suddenly, leaving him heir to his property, upon the receipt of which news young Damper returned to his native country, arriving shortly after the news of his own death had reached his parents. By way of surprise, he sent for his mother, and then, to his astonishment, heard of the derangement of his parent's affairs. His mother, who had been parted from her husband some time, he established in a house of her own, in which he lived, and together they watched with pain the progress of Damper's commercial downfall, permitting it to proceed, with the hope that sad experience would prove his mental cure. The result has been shown. The realization of that dread which had been the curse of his life (the fear of poverty) had made him a better man. That universal pass-key of sympathy—assimilation of suffering—had opened his heart; and in the very nick of time, when he had become enabled to appreciate enjoyment, it became his own; for an hour after his restoration to his son, the latter presented him with a full and honourable release from all his liabilities. He had bought them up. And with "John Damper," old age and happy associations proved the fallacy of the foolish doctrine of universal selfishness. God sends the human being as fresh and pure in its speciality from his hands as he does the young plants; and the whiter the wax that has to be formed, the greater the probability of its being soiled by the hands of its "workers up." Remember this, ye parents and guardians, ye artificers in infant human clay, that every touch of your hands makes an impression; therefore, beware that ye make no impression which you would not have stand in bold relief during the whole of its future existence. And, further, remember that the physician lives not who can prove the most deadly disease, in its worst stages, to be beyond the curative power of that Being who in his mercy first instilled into the human mind that consolatory maxim, that "While there's life there's hope."

W. D.

PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATIONS OF POPULAR FALLACIES.

No. 11.—“THE WORLD AS IT OUGHT TO BE.”

THAT word *ought* is a very great puzzle, and often creates much mischief, and leads to many fallacies in its application. “Applied to persons,” as Johnson says, “it has a sense not easy to be explained.” And hence, most persons in their application of it, use it in a sense that best suits their own convenience. It is almost as uncertain in its meaning in the form of a verb, as when in common colloquial discourse we use its substantive form to designate the cipher (0); and no one exactly knows whether we call it “an ought” or “a nought.” It is one of the most frequent forms of what logicians call *petitio principii*, or “begging the question.” The world ought to be so and so. Why? Because it ought. We seem to have no standard to which we can refer for its proper limitation. Even the Scriptures fail us in this instance, for we all claim the liberty of putting our own interpretation on these; and some men conscientiously and sincerely believe that we *ought* to derive such and such doctrines from them, while others as conscientiously and sincerely believe that we *ought not* to derive those doctrines, but some others, from the same source. And, therefore, if we could make the world what it ought to be, according to the views of some, it would be exactly what it ought not to be, according to the views of others. And so every man rides his own hobby, and there is a perpetual tilt and tournament going on between *ought* and *nought*—between the something that requires to be done and the nothing that is done, from the uncertainty and ambiguity attaching to the word “*ought*.”

Let us take, for example, the question of the education of the people. All men are agreed that to make the world as it ought to be, the people should be instructed in religion, virtue, and morality; but the means by which this instruction is to be conveyed cannot be agreed upon, because one party says it ought to be done after their fashion, according to their ideas of religion, virtue, and morality; and another party says not so, but after ours. And so the poor people are left to get their lessons in religion, virtue, and morality, after any fashion that may come in their way; and very queer notions

many of them do get. Then another party steps in and tells us that ignorance is the great foe to religion, virtue, and morality; and that, at any rate, we ought to give the people instruction in the first elements of general knowledge, without reference to dogmas or creeds; and immediately all those who, before, were quarrelling as to the mode in which dogmas or creeds ought or ought not to be taught, are firmly united against this third party, and call their scheme “godless,” and “infidel,” and many other hard names. And then nought is done, and poor “ought” is left in the lurch. Again, one party says that the State ought to provide for the instruction of the people, to remove from them the evils of ignorance, and put them in the way to be able to comprehend the great truths of religion, and thus lead them on to virtue and morality, piety and holiness. But another party steps in and says, the State ought to have nothing to do with instructing the people, but that it ought to be left entirely to the voluntary efforts of individuals. And these two parties fall foul of each other, and do battle with great ferocity, while the poor “people” stand by waiting patiently in their ignorance until the battle is fought out. Prejudice, bigotry, sinister interests, churches, sects, *isms* of every kind, are all combined to change *ought* into *nought*. And so we plod on our weary way, striving to get light out of darkness, to gather figs from thorns, to make bricks without straw, because men will go on disputing about that word *ought*.

Whenever men start an original or a great thought, intended for the benefit of their fellow-men, it is too often marred in the advocacy by their continually fancying that they have to deal with man as he *ought* to be, according to their notions, instead of remembering that they have to deal with man as he really is; and thus their arguments are addressed to feelings with which their audience have no sympathy. One of our old metaphysicians has told us “we only sympathize with feelings that we know.” To make an impression, then, on their audience, they should seek to touch those feelings which are best known to the audience, and not those which have the most influence over

themselves. They should deal with man as he is, and not as they imagine he ought to be, for there is very little influence where there is not great sympathy. Even in the pulpit we see continual evidences of this; the feelings of the congregation are not touched because the right chord has not been struck. Men go to church or chapel, and listen or appear to listen to the discourses they hear there, as a part of their religious duties, which it is necessary to perform that they may stand well in the eyes of the world; and after hearkening to a sermon on the vanity of riches, or the worthlessness of this world, they meet in the church porch to talk over the price of stocks, the state of crops, the money market and the cattle market, the state of politics and the state of trade, the vanities, frivolities, and nothingness of the day; the preacher has been appealing to feelings which, according to his views, ought to exist in their mind, and which, if they did exist there, might have been affected by his appeals; but the feelings were not there, and consequently his appeals were thrown away. But there is another question that we can treat with more freedom in a paper of this kind than the question of religion, in which the same evils arise from substituting their own views of what ought to be instead of attending to what is, and thus destroying all sympathy between them and their hearers. We mean the Temperance question. According to the promoters of this society, to make the world what it ought to be, we must all be perfectly sober; and to ensure that sobriety, we must abstain from all intoxicating drinks. They state that drunkenness is a great vice in itself, and promotes and increases almost every other vice which disgraces humanity. They draw a fearful and at the same time we are bound to say a true picture of the miseries, wretchedness, and crime that flow from it; and they propose for their remedy a plain and simple truth, which no one can dispute. Abstain from that which makes drunk, and drunkenness will cease. These men are in earnest; they believe that a certain thing ought to be done, and they do it—do it effectually, so far as they themselves are concerned. How they succeed in persuading others is another matter, which we shall touch on presently. Another set of men are equally persuaded with the former that drunkenness is a great vice—that all the evils which are attributed to it are truly so attributed, and that men ought to exert

themselves to diminish it and root it out; and they preach against it, and pray against it, and denounce it in all forms and shapes, and would take away licences from public-houses, and shut up beer-shops, and do anything in the world except the one practical thing that can alone certainly accomplish it. They seem to think that they ought to be continually fighting the enemy, that it is meritorious to be for ever engaged in the struggle, but that a real conquest over it would deprive them of the merit of the constant struggle. It is something like the wars we read of in English history, between the parliament and the king, in which we are told neither party wished for a complete victory, but were continually seeking a compromise between the two extremes; until at length came a man thoroughly in earnest, who soon knocked all these shams out of them—who not only saw what ought to be done, but did it. The class of men of whom we have been speaking see that something ought to be done, but they dispute about the manner in which it ought to be done, and so nothing is done; and they go on striving to find the happy mean between drinking and drunkenness—to effect a compromise, as it were, between *ought* and *nought*—and not seldom they are themselves the victims of the attempt.

Then the advocates of this great social reform, notwithstanding the one great and simple truth of their system, are continually running their heads against the wall, because they will not see the difference between what in their views ought to be, and what really is. They have an universal truth for the basis of their system, and they advocate it in a spirit of the narrowest sectarianism and the blindest bigotry. They rarely make any allowance for the difference in temperament between other men and themselves. To many of them the world is “drab-coloured,” and they imagine it ought to be “drab-coloured” to everybody else. They have no sympathies with the amusements of life, cannot perceive its green spots, are ascetic in their own habits, and therefore fancy that all people who are not as ascetic as themselves are in a state of reprobation. All the arguments of these men are tinged with a sombre colouring; and not having any sympathy with the amusements or recreations which are pleasing to other men, they fail to influence the very persons whom they most seek to convert to their principles. The great mass of young

people contract those habits which lead to drunkenness, in the search of that amusement and recreation for which in most minds there is a natural craving: perhaps there ought not to be such a craving, but so it is, and must be dealt with accordingly. Instead of enlisting the sympathies of the young and spirited, who are the most likely to fall into temptation, by showing them that all the sports and pastimes of youth—the athletic sports in particular—can be best enjoyed by the thoroughly temperate, they denounce all sports and pastimes whatever as the most idle waste of time, and thus create a prejudice against the truth they seek to establish in the minds of those who most need to adopt it, and furnish a ready argument, that is certain to be listened to, to those who have an interest in, or a desire of, maintaining the old customs. The truth they advocate is universal; is applicable to every state of society, and every peculiar condition of mind: the arguments in its favour should be universal also, applicable to all classes of society—to every peculiar state of mind. There are times when we may be diverted out of errors, but could not be preached out of them. There are many minds that can be more easily convinced by being amused than by being lectured. Suppose some three or four abstainers went into Cumberland, or into Cornwall, and carried away all the prizes in the wrestling ring. It would produce a greater effect upon a large body of men who are now entirely out of the reach of their arguments, than the most eloquent lecture. It would appeal to their senses in the manner most easily appreciated by them. As Luther adapted some of the sweetest secular music to sacred purposes, upon the principle that the devil should not have it all his own way, so the abstainers should seize on all those popular amusements which are not evil in themselves, but are sometimes made so by being connected with evil customs, and turn them to use. But as long as they go about the world telling people that they *ought* to be sober because they *ought*, they will be beaten by those caterers for the public taste, who understand the value of amusements and their influence upon the great mass of mankind.

Another impediment to their progress is, that their advocates will not content themselves with one thing at a time. They are continually mixing up their one great truth with other things that are not

equally true. One man, for instance, we knew, who had a crotchet in favour of wooden shoes; and he seemed to think that no man could be properly temperate who indulged in leather soles. Another has a horror of roast-beef, and seeks to convert the drunkard by long arguments in favour of peas and potatoes, which he thinks *ought* to be the general diet of mankind. And their hearers laugh at these crotchets, the impression made by the arguments in favour of their one great truth is weakened, the arguments themselves are forgotten, and the only recollection of what they have heard, that is carried away with them, is the nonsense that has been endeavoured to be drilled into them on wooden shoes, and peas and potatoes. The world cannot comprehend their *ought*, and so *nought* is done even towards that which all recognise as a great truth. Now, it is true that there are practitioners who can cure us of one disorder, though in other cases they may be but poor physicians and foolish empirics. There can be no doubt that if the world would adopt the prescriptions of the abstainers, they would cure the world of one great disease. But, unfortunately, they cram so many unnecessary drugs into the prescription—make it so nauseous and unpalatable, that the world turns up its nose at it, and refuses it altogether: they prefer the disease to the remedy, and *ought* is again mastered by *nought*.

We remember once—certainly a long time since—talking with one of these advocates, who went about the country with all kinds of horrible pictures of diseased organs produced by hard drinking—noses bigger than all the rest of the face, and of all the colours of the rainbow; angry stomachs with red and brown and black marks, shrivelled and dried up, as it were, with the potency of their drink. We asked him if he thought these exhibitions made much impression on the public mind; his answer was one of the most unconsciously severe satires on superficial thinkers we ever heard. He replied that he found them make a very great impression on that class of people. So that the very parties who, one might have thought, would have been actuated by the highest moral feelings, by their horror of the moral evils produced by drunkenness, by their strong religious convictions that it *ought* to be not only discountenanced, but vigorously assailed, are merely frightened into an attack on it by their fear of personal pains and penalties in the

shape of red noses and shrivelled stomachs. Is it any wonder, when it requires the fear of pain to induce the good, but weak, to do what *ought* to be done, that the love of pleasure should be all-powerful with others, and confirm them in doing *nought* in a matter from which they derive a certain amount of sensual pleasure and gratification?

We have used this illustration as applicable to many subjects that we could not deal so freely with, as showing us that in many great questions of morals, even when a clear and demonstrable truth is at the bottom of them, all men are not agreed upon the necessity of acting upon that truth, although they may be, and are agreed that the moral evil, which that positive truth attacks, *ought* to be put down. We have given the above as a strong case, because the remedy proposed is positive and certain, and no other remedy can by any possibility be so certain. In most other cases of morals and profession there is an amount of uncertainty connected with them, from the want of a universal standard, which renders it difficult to establish what *ought* to be done. In matters of physical science, where the search is after positive truth, none of these difficulties exist, and consequently the world moves on as it *ought* to do; every new truth, as soon as it is proved, is acted upon; something is done, and the world is improved by the value of that new truth. But in matters of morals, in questions of relative truth, the word *ought* seems to bear a very imperative sense, which all the world is not inclined to submit to—they will not bow down to the imperious dictates of any set of men; and it consequently happens that whenever *ought* is thrown in their faces,

they are very much inclined to treat it as *nought*. It is not every one who can sit down like Sir Walter Scott, and write away his disgust at the word *ought*, and then set to work and do the thing he ought to do. We copy from his journal:—"I am in a wayward humour this morning. I received yesterday the last proof sheets of *Woodstock*, and I ought to correct them. Now, this *ought* sounds as like as possible to *must*, and *must* I cannot abide. I would go to Prester John's country of free good will, sooner than I would *must* it to Edinburgh. Yet this is all folly, and silly folly, too; and so *must* shall be for once obeyed *after* I have thus written myself out of my aversion to its peremptory sound.—Corrected the said proofs till twelve o'clock, when I think I will treat resolution, not to a dram, as the fellow said after he had passed the gin-shop, but to a walk, the rather that my eyesight is somewhat uncertain and wavering." Here Sir Walter Scott knew what *ought* to be done, and did it, in spite of his objection to its imperative tone. And we also, if we all knew with certainty what *ought* to be done, and did it, instead of doing *nought*, might be as well rewarded, although perhaps in a different manner, as Sir Walter Scott. In the very next entry in his journal, the day after he had done what he ought to do, he says, "I have the extraordinary and gratifying news that *Woodstock* is sold for £2287.—all ready money—a matchless sale for less than three months' work?" However often we may suffer *nought* to conquer *ought*, we may be very certain that our wisest and happiest moments would be those spent in learning what *ought* to be done, and then doing it with our whole hearts.

THE GOLD SNUFF-BOX.

"Oh! what a thrilling joy the snuff-box gives."—*Southey*.

THE wild and feverish dominion of the marvellous, circumscribed and invaded as it has been by the increasing lights of civilization, and attacked by moralists and philosophers, still retains—in one of its regions at least—its ancient influence over the hearts and feelings of men. The appearance on earth of departed spirits continues even now to be a subject of fearful and anxious interest. In vain do many declare their scepticism; we all more or less, as circumstances affect us, evince some degree of practical belief; and no one listens to a narrative of this description without deep and concentrated attention. What is the cause of this real faith breaking forth amid assumed incredulity? Whence this fear, we know not wherefore nor of what, that lays such firm hold upon our feelings? Does not an answer suggest itself—a reply, of which those who acknowledge the truth would fain stifle the expression? "The belief in preternatural appearances," says Dr. Johnson, "could have become universal only by its truth." Let infidelity then listen to the following adventure, of which the narrator is at the same time the hero:—

It was the first night after my departure from Frankfort that I arrived at Gottingen, weary with my journey, and low-spirited at leaving a home (how much it cost to know the true force of that one word!) which was hallowed to me as the scene not only of past joy, but of past sorrow; for even grief lends a charm to its localities. My depression was augmented by the desolate appearance of my new habitation. The spaciousness of the rooms only served to render their bareness of furniture and the chilling nakedness of the walls the more obvious. How different from the snug neatness of the abode I had quitted! There everything was pleasant and delightful,—the inmates afforded me agreeable society when so inclined, and at other times never thought of interrupting the occupations of their lodger. But here every thing was different. The man of the house and his wife were two of the common-places of creation, and on the strength of some alleged relationship to me—heaven knows whence derived—on the side of the latter, conceived that I

must feel interested in whatever interested them. Their expectations, their disappointments, their squabbles, were therefore all so many inflictions on myself. Nor did I see any prospect of relief from the many vexations I was constrained to endure. I had changed my abode at the suggestion of an individual, to whom my friends, though not myself personally, were under some obligations, and I foresaw the reproaches I should provoke, if, in consulting my own comfort, I neglected to comply with their wishes. Thus circumstanced, I felt as a prisoner deprived of my free power of locomotion; and every thought in which I indulged upon the subject increased my inquietude. I escaped as soon as possible from the persecution of my host and hostess, and betaking myself to my miserable chamber, gave a free vent to my feelings;—I sat down "and wept when I thought of Babylon."

I threw open my window, and the free air rushed upon me in all its freshness. The moon was up, but the west was yet dyed with the lingering beams of the departed sun. Masses of silver-ridged clouds floated along, and caught a deeper tinge of beauty as some of the dying rays fell upon them. I thought how delightful it would have been, on such an evening, to have sat in my little garden at Frankfort, with my book, refreshed with as pure a breeze, and haunted by no internal disquiet to subdue the glow of my delight. But now the luxuries of external nature seemed but a mockery of my regret. I should have hailed with satisfaction the tempest, whose clouded and lowering sky would have better accorded with my own dark and melancholy temperament.

My nearest kindred I had lost early in life, and, that outlet of the affections closed, I contracted a stronger attachment to places and inanimate objects. The soul ever seeks something to love, and, disappointed in its hopes, clings fondly to the places where they grew and perished. Of these even I was now bereft; and unfriended and companionless, my cup seemed full of bitterness, and wild and dreary the waste that lay before me. At length I threw myself on my bed, and strove to seek in the forgetful-

ness of sleep a temporary relief from the conflicting thoughts by which I was distracted. The attempt was fruitless: the same uneasiness pursued me—the same figures rose before me;—the cheerful fireside of my residence at Frankfort, the smiling eyes and happy faces of its inmates, again presented themselves to my imagination, and were as suddenly and inexplicably changed into the dismal and soul-appalling desolation of my new abode, with its repulsive nakedness, its scant accommodations,—the one or two broken and tattered daubs that were gibbeted upon its walls, and the sour and meagre visages of my host and hostess.

After a feverish dozing of two or three hours—an eternity of torment—I awoke, if I could be said to awake from what was not sleep, more weary and exhausted than ever. The moonbeams, intercepted by the mere remnant of the curtain, spread their broad white light on the floor: and every object in the chamber was distinctly visible. I arose, and descended into the sitting-room; from the dying embers that cast their flickering glimmer on the hearth, I contrived to light a lamp, and rejecting any further ideas of sleep, sat down to look over the few torn volumes which lay in the room, my own books not having arrived from Frankfort. But had I expected much amusement from my researches, I should speedily have been undeceived. A work on cookery, Jacob Behmen's book on Regeneration, and a fragment of the Life of Martin Luther formed the most considerable part of the collection. I had no courage to inquire further, so pushing the books from me, I stretched out my legs, and lolled on the table in a spirit of determined endurance.

Suddenly it became dark: it seemed that the moon was totally eclipsed, though from this room it was previously visible. The wind rose and whistled, and now and then puffed down the chimney, raising a momentary gleam from the expiring ashes. At last it sank into a low moaning that lulled me with its melancholy wildness. I fancied at times that the distant, sullen roll of thunder mingled with the blast, and heavy drops of rain dashed faintly against the windows.

My meditations were too confused to admit of my calculating the progress of time, and I know not how long they had lasted, when I was interrupted in my reverie by a loud knock apparently at the

outer door of the house. I started; the knock was repeated, and before it was possible for any one to have given admission to the applicant, the door of the room in which I sat opened, and a stranger, to my perfect astonishment, walked deliberately in. If he took no notice of me, I was more inquisitive concerning him, and watched his motions with intense curiosity; though, as I have since recollected with surprise, without feeling the slightest inclination to address him, or to move from my seat.

The intruder was a man seemingly advanced in years, but remarkably tall and erect. An enormous great coat dripping with wet covered him, and the water poured also from a hat with a low crown and most exaggerated brim. A leathern belt was buckled around his waist, and a kind of gaiter of rough hide secured his legs. Such was his dress. He carried moreover in his hand a stout staff tipped with buck's-horn.

After having advanced to the hearth, he unbuckled his belt, and, drawing a chair to the fire, which had suddenly blazed up and threw a wild glare over the apartment, he removed his upper coat. He then placed it on the chair as if to dry, took off his portentously brimmed hat, and dashing from it a shower of water, hung it on a peg on the wall. All this was done in silence, and with a coolness that might have been natural in the master of the house, but seemed exceedingly odd in a stranger entering no one knows how in the middle of the night,—and one, too, who appeared to conceive it altogether superfluous to explain the cause of so extraordinary a visit.

The removal of the great coat and hat exhibited the wearer as apparently very old, but still firm, and, as I have said, of unusual stature. His countenance must once have been handsome, and wore even then a mild, dignified, and benevolent aspect, which was not diminished by the few venerable hairs that were strewed upon his forehead. There was a good deal of acuteness in his look, especially in his eyes, which were bright and dark. He did not sit down, but, standing before the fire with folded arms, gazed on the flames as they rose and fell, and was seemingly buried in deep meditation.

I had no power to remove my eyes from the object which was thus unexpectedly presented to my view. I continued to gaze, and my "great unknown"

remained in his original attitude, until the flames once more drooped into their former waning and expiring state. He stood there, immovable as a statue. I began to regard him with some degree of awe—perhaps of terror. My lamp emitted a faint and fitful glimmer around the apartment, and the light from the hearth was unsteady and precarious in the extreme. I could no longer trace the features of my companion; a sort of fearful and mysterious gloom pervaded the room—the house stood alone—I was the only inhabitant out of bed—the wind had ceased its low booming,—and the night was silent as death!

Suddenly the stranger turned towards me, and looked in my face with a wistful and melancholy gaze, expressive, as I fancied, of a feeling of compassion. My consternation redoubled. His bright eyes were fixed steadily upon me with a fascination as unavoidable as that of a serpent—it might be as fatal. My blood crept and curdled in my veins, and an icy chill thrilled through my frame. I wished and endeavoured in vain to address the old man. It was not so much that I seemed to myself to have lost the power, as that I wanted the courage to speak. Matters remained in this state some time; at last by a violent effort, like that by which one casts off an incipient nightmare, I sprang up—"In the name of goodness!" I exclaimed, "who and what are you?"

I was astounded. Instead of answering me, he took out an antique gold box, highly chased, and taking from it a pinch of snuff, held it to me. I durst not refuse his civility, and therefore took a portion of the dust, though without any intention of applying it to my nostrils. He replaced the box in his pocket from which he had taken it; was silent a few minutes, and then addressed me—

"You have heard of Von Steivenhauss, your great-grandfather?" His voice was firm, but hollow and deep.

I replied, "I have."

"You have heard, perhaps, of Carl Heiderfletcher, his friend?"

"Frequently."

"You know that they twice saved each other's lives?"

"I do;"—and as my courage was now on the increase, or as I became more used to the presence of my companion, I ventured to continue—"I know also, that they died together in battle, each striving as much for his fellow as himself."

"They did so. Your grandfather died

first, and Carl fell, oppressed with numbers, upon his body.—I am he."

Notwithstanding my boasted courage, I confess this direct acknowledgment of personal identity with a man who had been slain upwards of seventy years, startled me not a little.

As my readers may suppose, I gazed at him with some curiosity; but he returned my look with a glance so steady and piercing, that despite my usual habit of self-possession, I felt very uneasy. Not so the stranger, for a cooler or more determined person could not be met.

"Well," pursued he, "thus much do you know. But you do not know that before their death they entered into a compact, that each should, if permitted, watch over the descendants of the other, and assist them to the utmost when in danger or distress."

I professed my entire ignorance of such an arrangement.

"So it was," he continued; "we judged it better thus to decide, than that either should be the protector of his own race. Our reasons are immaterial."

There was no denying the likelihood of a ghost's reasons being immaterial; so I asked no questions, but suffered my informant to proceed with his narration.

"I was the last of my race. Your ancestor's covenant is therefore expired. He, however, yet survives in you. You will ere long be in danger. It is my business to protect you."

He again took out his snuff-box—"Let this," he said, "be your constant companion. In trifling difficulties open this box, and you will receive assistance. Should any serious evil overtake you, open it thrice and close it; but beware you part not with it—beware also that no criminality of your own brings upon your head the evil from which you seek to relieve yourself:—and now take your snuff."

From a personage to whom I laboured under such serious obligations, I could not refuse a proffered courtesy; I took one pinch, sneezed violently, and recovering with a start, found myself alone. The fire and the lamp were totally extinguished, and the gray light of the morning streamed through the windows. In vain did I look around; the old man was gone; the great-coat and huge brimmed hat had likewise vanished. I began to think, despite of the strength of my impressions, that all that had passed was the progeny of a dream—when resting

my arm on the table, it encountered some hard substance. On turning my head, I found the gold snuff-box. There needed no further evidence of the correctness of my recollections.

Some months passed away without any appearance or intimation of the threatened evil. Meanwhile I diligently pursued my studies, and regularly attended old Bluffer's winkle, the cabbage-wigged lecturer on humanities. I lived frugally, read constantly, and had no occasion to resort to my box to deliver me from difficulties.

Returning, however, one day from the Professor's, deeply busied in meditating on a metaphysical query which he had just propounded for my consideration, my eyes accidentally encountered those of a young female who was passing accompanied by an elderly domestic. Either from the confused haste with which she averted her looks, or from some inequality in the path, she half slipped, and in recovering herself dropped the delicately fashioned basket which she carried in her hand. My utmost alertness was in requisition to seize the basket sufficiently soon to prevent its contents from being scattered on the pavement; I succeeded, and on restoring it to the owner was rewarded with such a blushing smile and so sweet a murmur of thanks, that, unused as I was to the society of any females—except my hostess at Frankfort, who was much older, and her daughters who were much younger than myself—I doubt whether I was not more confused by the loveliness and grace of this fair creature, than by the appearance of my midnight visitor. So greatly was I disconcerted, that I suffered her to pass without making any reply to her acknowledgments, and stood stupidly gazing after her, until, remembering that I was in the public street, I blamed my own folly, and half determined to follow her, but perceived on looking back that she had already disappeared. I continued my walk homeward; and went to the Professor in the morning, indifferently prepared to solve the problem he had desired me to study.

Time passed: yet at intervals the idea of the fair incognita would introduce itself, with a mingled sensation of pleasure and disappointment, and I frequently detected myself casting inquisitive glances at females in whom I had traced, or imagined I had traced, a resemblance to the subject of my thoughts. But on a nearer approach the delusion always

vanished, and I sought in vain for the lovely features and inimitable smile I remembered so well.

It was my usual custom, at the latter end of the day, to walk a mile or two into the environs of the town, and when one path grew familiar to me, to ramble in some different direction. In this manner I one evening explored a new track, which after various windings led me by the spacious garden of a handsome habitation, and was terminated by a small lake, the banks of which were clothed with various species of pines, and with willows whose pendulous branches kissed fondly and constantly the surface of the waters. The beauty of the spot detained me awhile in admiration, and I continued to gaze upon it and on the sky, whose gorgeous and melting sunset radiance was unequalled save by the reflection of their splendour in the liquid mirror beneath.

Whilst thus occupied, the sound of two female voices saluted my ear, and speedily approached so near that I could distinctly hear the conversation of the speakers, one of whom, and as it seemed to me a very young girl, was soliciting her companion, whom I guessed to be somewhat older than herself, to sing.

"Now do, dear Lisette, do pray sing for me," said the younger.

"You know I have a cold and cannot sing, Margaret."

"Now that I won't believe, and so sing for me; do sing."

Apparently the entreaties of the little girl produced the desired effect, for presently I heard a very sweet voice singing: the words, as nearly as I can render them, were—

"From flower to flowret winging
The lightsome busy bee."

I was unable to catch more, as the fair vocalist had proceeded to too great a distance. However, she returned with her companion, and I heard the conclusion of her song—

"Would I were gaily ranging
With heart as free from cares."

"Thank you, dear Lisette," said the child, "thank you; but can't you—won't you sing it again?"

"Why, you little unconscionable creature, do you think I can sing all night for you?"

"No, not all night—only just sing that song again."

I listened, and the sweet voice again charmed my ear.

"From flower to flowret winging
The lightsome busy bee,
His hum of gladness singing,
Sweet riches gathers he;
Delights for ever changing,
Whose breast no poison bears;—
Would I were gaily ranging
With heart as free from cares."

In less than two minutes after the songstress had ceased, I heard a loud cry of distress, and clearing the enclosures of the garden, rushed forward, and had no occasion to inquire the cause. The little girl had, in her gambols, wandered too far from her companion, and, her foot slipping, had fallen into the lake, close by the margin of which stood the other female (in whom I instantly recognised the lady of my meditations) in the utmost agony, but unable, from the alarm of the moment, to speak—scarcely to sustain herself. I was no swimmer, but I sprang into the water, and caught the child as she rose to the surface; we both sank—and again rising, I snatched at the branch of a huge willow which hung over the lake, and, thus supported, contrived to keep partially above the water. But a fresh cause of terror speedily arose. The bough by which I held, not strong enough to sustain the double weight thus suspended from it, strained and cracked, and seemed every moment on the point of breaking. Lisette had fainted—my cries for assistance were vain; I was beginning to despair, when my talisman, which I carried constantly about me, occurred to me. Seizing the child's clothes by my teeth, and clinging by one hand to our failing support, I grasped with the other the box, and opened and closed it as it lay within my pocket. Immediately the willow branch was lifted up, and a boat was rowed beneath us. We were not three yards from the shore, and were instantly landed. I turned round to return my thanks to the rower, but the vessel had disappeared.

I ran with the child into the house, and committing her to the care of the domestics, hastened back to assist Lisette. I met her, however, recovered from her swoon, and flying with distracted looks towards the place I had just left. I loudly proclaimed the safety of her charge; the joy overcame her, and had I not caught her she would have fallen to the ground. It was a moment worth an existence. As she lay panting and trembling in my arms she raised her beautiful eyes, and gave me a look—such a look of joy and of thankfulness, so deep, so rapturous, that in the

many happy years I have since enjoyed I have scarcely known one moment of bliss equally intense. The wind played among her light tresses, and one drifted to my cheek. If ever there was magic in a touch, it surely thrilled in that. I pass over the subsequent meetings, the warm vows and the gentle confessions which followed: we both loved, and our stolen interviews were as delightful as they were pure and holy. It is unnecessary to be more minute: love narratives the readers of my own sex would not thank me for, and the ladies have imaginations to picture for themselves.

The next occasion on which I found it necessary to resort to my snuff-box was of a very different complexion. In a public room a few weeks afterwards, I had the misfortune to be involved in a quarrel with a man of dashing appearance, who thought proper to make some observations which I conceived reflected on my character. In the course of the dispute I said something implying a want of gentlemanlike conduct in my opponent.

He asked, with an appearance of great indignation, whether I doubted his being a gentleman.

"Sir," replied I, in as marked a tone as I could assume, "I have no doubt."

The issue was an arrangement to settle the dispute next morning, in an unfrequented spot about a mile from town.

Without incurring the imputation of cowardice, I may confess that I returned home with a heavy heart. Whatever might be the event of the conflict, it could not fail of being productive of much injury and probably of much misery to me. The rank and reputation I had hitherto maintained in the university, my expectations in life, and that dearest one which twined around my heart with the strength of something more than mere worldly interest, the hope that my fond Lisette would be indeed mine, would, even if I escaped, be, if not wholly blighted, yet deeply affected by my share in the unfortunate affair in which I had become engaged. These and other reflections sufficiently painful forced themselves upon my mind, until, defeated by their own vividness, they were succeeded by that stupor and heartless torpidity which follows over-excited animation. In this state I rushed into the street, and, ignorant of what I was doing, entered a tavern and called for wine, which I drank till my brain whirled round with frenzy under its influence.

How I got home I know not. But in the morning I found myself in bed, sud-

denly awakened by the rude grasp of men whom I had no recollection of having before seen—hard, cold, villainous-looking wretches, in whose countenance no trace of human feeling was visible. For a moment I gazed around unconsciously; the next, the horrid remembrance of my engagement flashed upon me like a death-stroke. But what the occasion or meaning of the interruption I had experienced, I neither knew nor could learn from my unwelcome guests, who compelled me hastily to dress myself, and then hurried me away in silence. We arrived at the public gaol. Here I was incarcerated alone in a damp and miserable cell.

It would be useless to detail the examinations I underwent or the hardships I endured. I stood charged, I was informed, with murder—with the murder of the very man with whom I had quarrelled the night previous. His body was found early in the morning in a retired street. I had been seen passing that way a short time before its discovery with a violent and agitated demeanour, and my dispute with the deceased was so public that suspicion immediately attached to me. What was worse, I had no means of rebutting the presumption of my guilt arising from these unhappy coincidences.

Remanded to my loathsome cell, my first impulse was to open and shut three times, according to the old man's directions, the box which was to preserve me in extremity. Once—twice—my heart palpitated violently as I closed it the third time. I looked around—some moments elapsed, and I despaired. There was no appearance of assistance; I remained alone, and the iron door of the prison remained closed.

Hours, days, and weeks passed, without any aid or comfort for the wretched captive. My mental torments increased every moment. I thought of my home on the pleasant banks of the Maine. I thought of the bright eyes and fond heart of Lisette. Then darker dreams took possession of my bewildered soul. Was it possible that I was actually guilty of the crime alleged? That in my mad insensibility, and infuriated by wine, I had met and destroyed my victim? Of all my pangs, this supposition struck the deepest. The horrid phantom thus conjured up hovered continually around me, and the thought of an ignominious and public death increased the misery of my situation.

My trial came on. I had no witnesses whose testimony might exculpate me.

Presumption was against me. I stated my case; was heard with respect and attention, but with evident incredulity.

Nothing remained but for sentence to be pronounced. The judge had prepared himself, had opened his lips to fulfil this last part of his awful duty, when he was interrupted by a sudden disturbance; and a confused murmur arose in the court of "witnesses for the criminal." Deserted as I had been by the expectation of relief, the hope now given birth to was too strong for me. A mist darkened my vision—I heard nothing—I saw nothing, till roused from my insensibility by the information that I was free.

A witness had appeared, had exculpated me by his testimony from the suspicion of the alleged crime, and had pointed out the real murderer, who on his apprehension had confessed his guilt. I reeled away, scarcely conscious of what had happened, to my lodgings, and was received with congratulations which I wanted not, mingled with admonitions as to my future conduct which I despised.

I sought the privacy of my own apartment. The first object that met my sight was the figure of Carl Heiderfletcher, with his broad-brimmed beaver. I was about to speak, but he motioned me to be silent.

"The threatened danger is past," said he. "I have saved your life; it yet remains to make it worth enjoying. You love Lisette, the merchant's daughter, and are beloved by her; go to her father, and make your proposals. I shall await your return."

I went, though with little hope of making any impression upon the purse-proud citizen. I saw him, and spoke of my love for his daughter, when he asked if I had 30,000 rix dollars.

A pretty question to a man who had never in his life been possessed at one time of fifty!

"I am not at present able to command that sum, but——"

"Then you may go about your business."

"Supposing," I said, "I should be able to raise that sum?"

"Why, then, and supposing also that my daughter liked you, I might, perhaps, on inquiry respecting you, have no great objection to the match. But in the meantime I wish you a very good morning."

I returned, cursing the avarice of the man, and the wantonness which had occasioned me to be sent upon this fool's

errand. Carl Heiderflitcher was waiting for me. I recounted to him all that had passed.

"Humph! give me the box I lent you; you will have no further occasion for it."

I took out the box.

"Empty it before you give it me."

I opened it to shake out the snuff, and there followed a shower of gold pieces,

which lasted some seconds. I turned in amazement to the stranger; he was gone, having taken with him his box, which I had dropped from my hand in my excessive and delighted surprise.

I gathered up the money and counted it. There was gold to the amount of 40,000 rix dollars.

I was married a fortnight afterwards.

SUNSET IN THE LEVANT.

On the summit of a mountain
Sat a stranger, all alone,
By a little limpid fountain,
Trickling slowly from the stone.
Low beneath him, scarce in motion,
Like a mirror, lay the sea,
Calm as souls, in pure devotion,
Praying to the Deity.
Blue the waves were: on them gliding
Dolphins gamboll'd—whiles between
Thoughtless mariners, confiding,
Here and there in ships were seen.
Breeze and billow seemed to slumber;
Phœbus, with a golden glow,
Scattered spangles without number,
As his car descended low.
Clouds, arrayed in rosy colour,
Now the burning disk invest,
Till the magic scene grows duller,
And the orb has sunk to rest.
Twilight came, to dawn related
(At their birth, to their regret,
He and Dawn were separated,
And since then have never met):
Lovely maidens, homeward wending
From the spring with graceful tread,
Pass him, statue-like, nor bending
With the pitchers on their head.
On their foreheads rubles jingle;
On the wrist the bracelet plays;
Joyous, in the laugh they mingle,
But they shun the stranger's gaze.
Whilst he sits thus idly musing,
Tamarisks, with feather'd leaf,
Bend to zephyrs, balm diffusing;
And upon some rocky reef,
Boatmen, with their labour weary,
Moor, to take their evening meal,
Singing ditties loud and cheery,
As the cooling air they feel.

Lo! the camel, sorely laded,
Bends his neck some herb to crop;
Parched his mouth with thirst, and
jaded—

Well, there's none whereat to stop.
Barefoot walks the ragged driver,
Native of the desert plains:
Poor he seems, without a stiver—
Trust him not! he hides his gains.
But the night is fast approaching,
And the dew o'erspreads the ground;
Lurking wolves are now encroaching:
Listen! what's that dismal sound?

'Tis the jackal fiercely screaming,
Like a shrieking murdered child;
Surely there are eyeballs gleaming!
Lone's the place—the mountain's
wild.

No; but 'tis a greater danger;
'Tis the Arab, with his spear
And his *abbah*.* him the stranger
(Stealthy ever) has to fear.

Lives he not by theft and plunder,
Like the robber on the road?
Laws have never kept him under;
And he knows no fix'd abode.

Hasten, stranger—though so splendid
Day may close, of night beware!
Seek some village—day is ended:
Hence, and taste the peasant's fare.

Stranger, stay not; seek the cottage:
Pipe, to tranquillize the mind,
Leben,† fruit, and seething potage,
And a welcome thou shalt find.

* *Abbah*, the Syrian cloak that envelopes the person.

† *Leben* is the curd of goat's milk, prepared in a particular way in Syria, and greatly relished in hot weather.

TALBOT OF EARN'S CLIFFE.

A ROMANCE OF THE '45.

By J. C. AYRTON.

CHAPTER I.

"HE DIES, BUT MAKES NO SIGN."

"She showed an iron coast and angry waves,
You seemed to hear them climb and fall,
And roar, rock-thwarted, under bellowing
caves,
Beneath the windy wall."—TENNYSON.

WITHOUT—the winter wind shrieking over downs knee-deep in falling snow; the sea, lashed to fury, thundering against the cliffs on the brink of which stands the Castle of Earn's Cliffe.

Within—the Red Room at Earn's Cliffe; the tapestry hanging on its walls quivering in the light of the dim fire and of the single candle that render yet more gloomy its sombre aspect and furniture; the immense bed, furnished with faded crimson velvet; the massive, straight-backed chairs; the red damask window-curtains; the large, heavy oaken cabinet; the mirrors, framed in tarnished gilt, flashing out eerily as the light glances upon them, and they reflect a little group gathered round the bed of a sick man.

Sir Anthony Talbot lies dying in the Red Room, in which many a master of Earn's Cliffe has met and been conquered by his last and most relentless foe. His life has been a turbulent and wicked one, stained with every vice, tainted by the suspicion of darker deeds. His only virtue, a brute courage—common to him and to the bulldog lying at his feet—nerves him now, as his last hour runs out.

A hireling's hand props the pillows which raise the emaciated form, worn less by age than by the wild passions and evil pleasures of a stormy and unbridled life. Apart stands Stephen Talbot, the grandson and namesake of the dying man; a true Talbot of Earn's Cliffe—though his grandfather has hated, and still hates him, more than ever he detested mortal foe—middle-sized, broad-shouldered, deep-chested, long-armed; of grim, massive features, black beard and hair, swarthy complexioned, heavy-browed, with gleaming eyes and teeth.

At Sir Anthony's right hand kneels the chaplain, a dark-visaged, robed and tanned priest, holding a crucifix, to which he tries to turn the eyes of the dying man,

as he urges him, with fevered earnestness, to receive the last offices of the Church while there is yet time. Sir Anthony's grey head is obstinately averted; his hollow eyes, in which some of their youthful fire still lingers, have a listening, expectant look. At last he turns impatiently to the priest.

"You weary me, Father Adrian. Tell me, are not confession, repentance, and restitution necessary, ere the soul can be absolved?"

"Undoubtedly they are."

"Then trouble me not. I repent not; I will not confess; neither will I restore. See that you weary me no more."

A dark frown had crossed his brow; a sardonic smile gleamed in the dying eyes as the priest warned him of the doom.

"Spare your energies, father, to say masses for my soul. Money, the Church allows, is effectual to open even the door which St. Peter stands to guard."

"Enter not the presence of the Almighty with blasphemy on your tongue," said Father Adrian.

Sir Anthony turned angrily from him.

"Prate not to me, priest," he said, with a muttered curse. "The sobbing of the night wind and the dashing of the waves are the only requiem I crave; and to them I would fain once more hearken. Yet I would the storm abated. Gwendolyn, my child Gwendolyn, my soul cannot depart without seeing thee."

He stirred uneasily and moaned. In a few moments he spoke again, in a fainter and more laboured voice, to the servant at his head—

"Marland, how is the night?"

Stephen Talbot, moving to the window, raised the heavy curtain and looked out.

The small taper, which shed a faint gleam over the large and sombre room, did not afford sufficient light to obscure to a gazer within the scene without. Among the angry clouds rose high a crescent moon, throwing its uncertain gleam over the snowy waste, which stretched for miles without a sign of human life to mitigate the desolation of the wild, bleak downs, covered with frozen snow. The castle stood so close to the cliff that the dull thunder of the waves reverberating against its sheer and abrupt sides, shook

the very foundations of Earn's Cliffe, rocking the room and bed in which the dying man lay.

As Stephen Talbot gazed, an immense sea-eagle rose from its eyrie, flapping its huge wings and screaming loudly, into the storm-tossed clouds.

"The earn leaves its eyrie when the lord of Earn's Cliffe dies," said Sir Anthony, with a grim smile, but labouring breath. "Father Adrian, it grows dark; tell Gwen——"

The door was hastily flung open, and a girl of twenty, tall, fair-haired, and blue-eyed, rushed in, throwing herself on her knees at the bedside. A young man of five-and-twenty—chestnut-haired, and dark-eyed, wrapped in a horseman's coat, which disguised all his figure but an uncommon height—followed her, and approaching the bed, gazed for a moment on the figure of the dying man. Then, turning to Father Adrian, and questioning him as to the cause and manner of the impending death, he learned that a fit, sudden and quickly over, but fatal in its effects, had snapped the thread of Sir Anthony's life.

Gwendolyn Talbot, summoned to attend the dying bed of the grandfather whom she had left that morning in perfect health was escorted through her miserable journey by her cousin, Geoffrey Arthington, the son of Sir Anthony's only daughter, Sybilla Talbot.

The girl seized the old man's passive hand and pressed it to her heart, then, bending her head over it, gave way to an agony of tears.

"Grandfather, speak to me," she cried; "your own Gwenda! Say farewell to her before you go."

He feebly moved the disengaged hand. Father Adrian, supporting him, guided it to the fair head of his granddaughter and heiress, the only child of the elder son, the sole woman to whom Sir Anthony's love had ever brought aught but sorrow or shame. The girl's slight figure was convulsed with an agony of silent grief; she knelt for minutes motionless in the attitude in which she had flung herself, clasping the stiffening hand in hers, her head buried in the coverlet, a stream of her long, fair hair falling over her riding-dress, white with flakes of snow.

A dead silence reigned throughout the room: the priest, still kneeling, his lips moving as if in prayer, held aloft the holy rood. Geoffrey Arthington watched his

grandfather's departure, Gwendolyn's agony, with tears dimming his bright blue eyes. Stephen Talbot, unmoved, saw the last gasp drawn, and the grey head fall back.

Father Adrian murmured a prayer for the repose of the dead man's soul: Gwendolyn, hearing him, sprang to her feet.

"Holy Virgin! he dies. Father, his immortal soul!"

She clutched the priest's arm; her eyes compelled the truth.

"The Holy Eucharist is never administered, my daughter, save to such as confess, repent, and are absolved. Sir Anthony, I fear, died in mortal sin. Nevertheless, daughter, the mercies of God are great."

But Gwendolyn heard him not—she had fainted. Geoffrey Arthington bore her insensible form from the room.

* * * * *

Stephen Talbot had watched the servants close the eyes and compose the limbs of their dead master. Father Adrian, in the chapel, was already celebrating mass for the repose of the departed soul. Geoffrey still waited to hear from her attendants of Gwendolyn's restoration to consciousness, long delayed. The servants withdrew from the Red Room, and Stephen Talbot—the last male scion of the house of Talbot of Earn's Cliffe, penniless, homeless, and friendless—watched alone for the first hour by the body of the dead. Turning down the sheet which covered it, he gazed long and fixedly at the grim saturnine face, the secrets of whose stormy life had died with him. The countenance of his grandfather, so like his own, wore for Stephen Talbot in death the same scowl of indomitable dislike which in life it had always borne for him. Hatred as deep and as unrelenting gleamed vindictively in the eyes which watched the prostrate form.

"Free!" said Stephen Talbot, at length, the elation of his heart finding vent in words. "For the first time in a life of thirty years, free! To seek revenge for the galling insults, the petty servitude in which I have eaten the bread of charity, a despised dependent upon the man whose nearest male representative I am, whose heir I ought to have been."

His expression changed; the light of anticipated triumph shone in his dark eyes.

"But stay! Patience a little longer, and then revenge. My cousin Arthington, my lady Gwendolyn, beware."

CHAPTER II.

"THE TALBOTS OF EARN'S CLIFFE."

"The family, in all its members, having been Papists and Jacobites since the days of William the Conqueror."—*Rob Roy*.

FROM the time of the Conquest Talbots had held the Castle of Earn's Cliffe, long ruling with an almost regal and iron sway the scattered inhabitants of the drear and wild country round, the most bleak and desolate portion of the downs which skirt the Sussex coast.

Catholics the Talbots of Earn's Cliffe had invariably been: as invariably they had been warlike and turbulent; of unbridled passions and remorseless hands. Gay spendthrifts, wild roysterers, brave soldiers, stern bigots, the line had produced in plenty. Among the roll of centuries might be counted here and there a vaunted devotee, whose name was dear to the Church—to whose riches his bounty had added magnificently. But no statesman, no politician, no genius fired with the glow for fame, mingles in the throng.

Nevertheless, with truth the Talbots of Earn's Cliffe boasted the only virtues they thought worthy of vaunt: all their men were brave, and all their women virtuous. Nay, more—many of the ladies of their line had been of singularly devout and blameless lives; most of the men had owned the influence of a rude chivalry, which induced a certain honour and truth. Splendid alliances had linked the Talbots with every Catholic house in England; more than one offshoot sprung from the family tree had founded a titled race. But the heads of the line remained simple gentry for centuries, winning their knight-hood in civil turmoils or foreign wars; until after Naseby Charles I. bestowed a baronetcy on Sir Stephen Talbot, in guerdon for an unremitting devotion to the falling cause.

Sir Anthony Talbot, whose death-bed scene we have witnessed, was the only son and heir of this Sir Stephen, and had married at eighteen a wife chosen for him by his father, according to the fashion of the time two hundred years ago. The lady was well born, a Catholic, and an heiress: the father was completely satisfied: the son might have loved and treated her well, for she was good and gentle, as well as nobly descended and wealthy, but she was plain, and several years older than her husband; as ill fitted too by character and disposition to mate with Sir Anthony as the ring-

dove with the kite. But she was an orphan, the sole surviving member of a junior branch of one of our historic houses; her guardians, having no sons to whom to give her—doubtless anxious to wash their hands of a profitless and onerous charge—married her to the son of Sir Stephen Talbot, and then left her to a fate with which indeed they would have had little power to interfere.

Sir Stephen died six months after his son's wedding: and by his death his daughter-in-law lost her only friend. Sir Anthony, dissolute and vicious even beyond the average of Charles's profligate crew, treated his wife shamefully, and neglected his children entirely; the only tranquil time to either falling during his long and frequent absences from Earn's Cliffe, amid scenes and with companions more congenial to his taste.

His eldest son Geoffrey, afterwards Gwendolyn Talbot's father, left his home at sixteen, and entered the French service. For years no intelligence of him reached his family; but at length a rumour that he was dying, and under circumstances of much poverty and misery, came to Sir Anthony while carousing with the boon companions who rendered the castle during his infrequent visits a very pandemonium.

A glimmer of paternal feeling induced the father to tear himself from his guests, and pay a short visit to his heir, at the place indicated as his abode. Returning, Sir Anthony confirmed the intelligence of Geoffrey's approaching death, adding the startling information that he had been married to a foreigner of family, that he had become a widower, and would leave behind him one child, a daughter, who as the issue of the eldest son, was the heiress of Earn's Cliffe. A few weeks after, certain news of his demise was conveyed to Sir Anthony by a woman who brought with her the infant, Gwendolyn, whom, for want of other guardianship, Geoffrey Talbot intrusted to his father's care.

Lady Talbot had long been dead. Sir Anthony, though not much past middle age, was already broken down by a life of riotous indulgence. Suddenly dismissing the companions of his dissipation, he resolved to rehabilitate if possible the health and purse he had already almost fatally crippled. By a few vigorous measures he brought about a total reformation in the household; committed to the chaplain, Father Adrian, the reins of his temporal affairs; received his little granddaughter

with kindness, acknowledged her as his heiress, and bestowed upon her an affection and a care a tithe of which he had never before devoted to anything human. Those who knew best the grim old baronet, however, said that this unwonted tenderness did not spring from love or pity to his dead son, or to the little orphaned child; that it was from hatred of the memory of his second son Anthony, whose child would otherwise have become the heir of Earn's Cliffe, that Sir Anthony acknowledged so readily and cherished so carefully the little granddaughter who was so strange yet so lovely a blossom to spring up in the shadow of the grey old castle walls.

The child who was thus disinherited by Gwendolyn's birth was the Stephen Talbot we have already encountered at Sir Anthony's bedside: now by his grandfather's death, Sir Stephen; though landless, the representative of the family of Earn's Cliffe, were it not for a shadow of doubt which hangs over the legitimacy of his paternity. To explain this I must again go back.

During the first years of Geoffrey Talbot's absence, his brother Anthony had grown up to emulate his father's vices, cursed with a temper worse than even Sir Anthony's had ever been. The father and son hated each other, and their discord made the house miserable, driving poor Lady Talbot earlier to her grave by their incessant broils. When young Anthony died of brain fever at twenty years of age, a horrible whisper ran throughout the country that the fever was induced by a blow struck during a drunken quarrel at Earn's Cliffe, the object of which quarrel was a country woman famed for her beauty, admired by both father and son.

The son died—of fever, the doctors said—of delirium tremens, Sir Anthony avowed. The night he died, the girl about whom the dispute had arisen came to the castle with a baby in her arms, certificates of marriage and of baptism in her hands, testifying that she was lawfully wedded to Anthony Talbot, that the child was his, baptized, as she had been married, by the Protestant vicar of Whitehaven, the neighbouring and parish church.

Sir Anthony stormed and swore. Father Adrian, knowing the family from whom the mother came—a crew of smugglers, the most disreputable of the fishermen at Whitehaven Bay—and seeing the almost certainty which then possessed the minds

of all around Earn's Cliffe, that Anthony's elder brother, never heard of, must have died abroad, persuaded the baronet into a sulkily acknowledgment of the child as the future and inevitable master of Earn's Cliffe. More than this Sir Anthony would not do, but, telling Father Adrian to keep the beggar's brat from his sight as long as either should live, he gave the priest a tacit permission to act towards it as he thought fit. The mother married in a year a connexion of her own. Father Adrian took the child and educated him; and, in an almost deserted corner of the inner quadrangle of the castle—never venturing near the precincts of the outer, to which infirmity almost completely confined Sir Anthony—the boy grew up, cared for by neither grandfather nor parent; caring for none save for the son of his mother's second marriage, whom we shall hereafter meet; hating his cousin and supplanter, Gwendolyn, with a wild and passionate hatred.

I have said that the legitimacy of his birth was obscured by a shadow, slight, but perhaps to prove hereafter of powerful moment. It had never been openly challenged, even by Sir Anthony. The care Father Adrian spent upon his education seemed to prove that he, at least, regarded it as of little consequence. Yet, when Stephen, arrived at his majority, and becoming aware that upon the legality of his parents' marriage depended his future title to the baronetcy, tried to find positive proofs that it had been celebrated with all due and perfect forms, he failed to attain his object. His mother and the witnesses were dead; Mr. Osborn, the vicar of Whitehaven, the clergyman said to have officiated, had also died years ago; and no register of the wedding was to be found among the records of Whitehaven church. From his mother's family, or from Sir Anthony, neither certificates nor confirmatory circumstances could be obtained, and the shadow remained to blight a character and prospects already sufficiently sombre and unpromising.

Besides two sons—Geoffrey and Anthony—Sir Anthony Talbot had had one daughter, Sybilla, who married when young Stephen was three years old, and who became, two years later, the mother of one child, Geoffrey Arthington. When Stephen was ten years old, and little Arthington five, Gwendolyn, a baby under a twelvemonth, arrived at Earn's Cliffe; and upon her Father Adrian bestowed, in course of time, at Sir Anthony's desire,

the same careful education he had of his own free will given Stephen Talbot, then finishing, still at the priest's charges, his education at St. Omer's. The childhood of Gwendolyn was not so completely lonely and secluded as that of her supplanted cousin had been. Her grandfather cherished her fondly and indulged her completely, repaid by the solitary and unbounded devotion of her childish heart, which strengthened and intensified as years rolled on and she grew up to womanhood, a stately and beautiful offshoot from the rugged old family tree, nourished tenderly, though in grim companionship and in a lonely and singular situation.

At intervals, too, Sybilla Talbot, the wife of a Yorkshire squire of property named Arthington, visited, with her son Geoffrey, the Sussex property settled upon her as a dowry; and Gwendolyn, insensible to the calm regard of her aunt and uncle, felt, if she did not thoroughly return, the passionate affection lavished upon her by her boy cousin, their son. Ardent flame, perhaps, was needed to thaw a chilly covering of ice which seemed to have frozen partly over a heart glowing with religious faith and loyal devotion to the exiled Stuarts, but in which no other and purely personal love or power of loving appeared to exist, save for her adored grandfather. Father Adrian, as a docile pupil and enthusiastic Catholic, Gwendolyn Talbot honoured and implicitly trusted, being entirely guided by his opinions and advice. To the priest's influence, doubtless, might be attributed a friendship she always felt and showed, despite her grandfather's displeasure, to her elder cousin, the chaplain's *protégé*, Stephen Talbot.

Years passed on, and the disinherited grandson, his education completed, returned to the castle. It was probable that, at the customary age, he might embrace the only vocation which appeared open to him and for which his course of life hitherto had seemed to prepare him, by taking orders and becoming a Catholic priest; but until that time the chaplain urged his grandfather to permit him to make Earn's Cliffe his home. From Sir Anthony the Jesuit's influence also wrung a pittance sufficient to supply to Stephen the necessities of life; and in the two rooms of the inner quadrangle of the castle which had from childhood been tacitly granted to his use, he lived, except during intervals of frequent absence in London

or abroad, of uncertain duration and mysterious occupation.

At Earn's Cliffe, Stephen Talbot led a secluded and independent life; his temperament was so reserved that even Father Adrian knew nothing of his *protégé's* disposition, tastes, or character, of his aim in life, or bent of religion and politics, save, as regarded the former, that he attended occasionally the services in the chapel at Earn's Cliffe, meeting then only the gentry who, as Gwendolyn grew older, sometimes enlivened the seclusion of the castle.

The story of his origin, and the fact of his connexion, by the mother's side, with some of the rudest of the fishermen along the coast, placed a barrier between him and the higher class of the Sussex families around, whom Stephen Talbot at once hated for their pride and contemned for their ignorance of letters and the world. Among the country folk of low degree, he shared the evil reputation of his race, enhanced, in his instance, by rumours, darkly whispered, of midnight adventures both on sea and highway, indulged under cover of his almost monastic seclusion at Earn's Cliffe. But the fishermen of the coast admired and even loved him, honouring him with a kind of rugged chivalry as a daring leader in some of their most dangerous exploits, bound to some among them by close ties of blood, freely acknowledged on his part.

That he was sufficiently—and, for that day, uncommonly—learned, accomplished in the gentlemanly exercises of the day, were facts patent to all. A certain force of will and character gave him over some minds an irresistible influence; his education at St. Omer's had supplied him with an address and air attractive at his pleasure, enabling him to value slightly some outward advantages of nature prepossessing both to men and women, but which had been denied to him. The Talbots had never been a handsome race; and Stephen's low but powerful frame, endued with an almost gigantic force of muscle and length of arm, his swarthy skin, jet black hair, and overhanging brows, were rugged, but faithful, family characteristics, evident marks of his paternity.

The death of Sir Anthony has left these three cousins the sole scions of the ancient Talbots of Earn's Cliffe; the baronet has made no will, and Gwendolyn Talbot, as the heiress of the eldest son, has succeeded to all the property and estates.

CHAPTER III.

A PEDLAR.

"Southern hills

That to the setting sun their graceful heads
 Rearing, o'erlook the frith where Vesta breaks
 With her white rocks the strong impetuous tide,
 When western winds the vast Atlantic urge
 To thunder on the coast."

THE castle of Earn's Cliffe, a fitting eyrie for the eagles who have bred there, stands on the edge of a cliff which rises sheer from the sea to the height of six hundred feet. For miles around as far as the horizon stretch wide undulating downs; against the foot of the Earn's Cliffe the waves thunder at high-water. No more magnificent prospect in England exists than that viewed from the Castle towers, combining in the grandeur of its details a noble sea, stupendous cliffs, distant hills, an apparently illimitable extent of wild moorland. On both sides of Earn's Cliffe, the cliff dips gradually; to the west extends a grand sweep of bay, named from a little town lying at the distance of a mile and a half from the sea in a valley of the Downs, Whitehaven Bay.

This town we shall hereafter have occasion to visit; at present, the course of our story leads us to the sea-coast and the fishing hamlet of Whitehaven Bay, where a few fishermen and smugglers have built their huts in the shelter of the cliffs, in a situation remote and dreary enough for the exercise of their calling, carried on by a class so rude and hardy that Whitehaven Bay is a name of fear to excisemen and sheriff's officers, carefully avoided by both forces, unless supported by a body of soldiers strong enough effectually to overawe the coastmen.

Horrible stories are still rife of atrocities committed by these fishermen: of poor wrecked seamen, who, dashed on shore by the remorseless sea, "found the rocks themselves not more merciless than the people who ranged about them for prey;" of revenue officers "pinned down just above low-water mark," to meet a lingering death from the terrible advance of the creeping tide; of death-lights hung out to entice labouring vessels to a double doom; of the "fierce delight" with which savage watchers heard the minute-gun signal the death agony of the parting ship.

On the shore of this hamlet, one May evening in 1745, the setting sun went down upon a different scene. The tide,

half-way up, rippled softly over level sand; high upon the shingle were drawn the fishing-boats; children gambolled among the creels and nets; a few men—pipes in their mouths, the invariable ducks, blue Guernsey, and tarpauling hats their characteristic dress—watched the rapid progress of a bark a little way out at sea, making all sail for land. The words and phraseology in which they discussed the probable fortune of the master of the coming craft were alike coarse; here was still spoken Saxon so barbarous and uncouth as to be Greek to the polite traveller who should chance to his horror to find himself among these semi-savages; but from year's end to year's end Stephen Talbot and the Rev. Robert Evelyn, the young vicar of Whitehaven proper, were the only persons of a rank superior to its fishing inhabitants that ever visited the Bay. A passing glimpse of its neighbourhood seen by Horace Walpole in a summer excursion some four or five years after this date, effectually "damped" his travelling ardour for an entire year, accustomed though he had been to foreign inns and roads found formidable by English tourists at the present day. "Journeying over alpine mountains drenched in clouds," "peopled by inhabitants as savage as if George the Second were the first monarch of the East Angles," proved too much for the fortitude even of the travelled Horace.

On the shore of Whitehaven Bay—tenanted by a nest of fishermen certainly as "savage" as any of the inland peasantry Walpole encountered—John Beard, mariner, master of the *Mary Anne*, ran his fishing-smack, *alias* his smuggling vessel, on this May evening. The voyage had been favourable, the cargo good; the smuggler, a surly Sussex man, unbent a little from his accustomed gruffness of manner and speech as the fishermen on the beach gathered round the vessel, proffering their aid in landing its freight. John Beard, the master of the *Mary Anne*, is the half-brother of Stephen Talbot, the son of his Whitehaven mother's second marriage; as such, he requires some introduction to the reader. Corduroy trousers, and a striped blue Guernsey, clothe a powerful frame; a yellow bandanna neckerchief is twisted loosely round a brawny throat guiltless of collar, but betraying a development which augurs fairly for the muscularity of his herculean proportions. His eyes were dark; like his half-brother's, they were set under

thick black eyebrows and deeply overhanging brows; the expression of his swarthy face and rugged features betokened a resolute hardihood and a dogged determination of character.

The *Mary Anne*, besides sundry casks of spirit and divers bales of French goods of various kinds, all duty free, had brought over one passenger, a foreigner, apparently about thirty years of age. This man had stood by to watch the unloading of the cargo; then, shouldering a heavy package, he asked John Beard, in an accent strange to his Sussex ears, to direct him to some place where he could get supper and a glass of beer.

"Hard at hand, master, at the King's Head, my place yonder. I drive two trades—a mariner's at sea, a publican's on land. Follow me; I'll lead the way. Here, lend a hand."

Shifting his pack to the left shoulder, the foreigner took, as directed, one handle of a small wicker-covered cask, doubtless containing some choice spirit of French distillery.

On the Earn's Cliffe side of the hamlet, at the extreme left, John Beard indicated to the stranger a small, whitewashed, straw-thatched house, standing alone at a considerable distance from any other dwelling, and half-way up the cliff, in that part not more than a hundred feet high. An ascending gap cut in the chalk, the only means of ascent to the upper world for the dwellers in the hamlet, led past this cottage, built upon a projection in the cliff. Thither the two men made their way, over the shingle and up the steep ascent, to the King's Head.

It was a miserable place, a mere apology for an inn. "However," perhaps thought the stranger, "'Needs must when somebody drives.'" The landlady, summoned by the landlord to attend his orders, was John Beard's wife; and her mild face, fresh complexion, and large patient eyes, went far to recommend to an indulgent judgment the scanty appointments of her sole sitting-room and simple meal. She had been an ordinary country girl, fair and comely like the Sussex maidens often are; but the birth and loss of children had made her a suffering yet patient woman, too good and tender for a smuggler's wife. She prepared quickly the dish of eggs and bacon which was the only meal her stores afforded; John Beard shared it with the foreigner, while his wife Alice pursued some household avocations in another room. The landlord

was the first to finish; he eyed the stranger, unconscious of his scrutiny, with a doubtful eye. Foreigners, always unpopular with John Bull in general, were especially disliked by the country people of that day.

"You like our beer, muster," observed John Beard, as the guest drained the tankard, and setting it down, rose to take his leave.

The stranger was, as I have said, a man of thirty, with black whiskers and moustache, and black hair carefully dressed and floating on his shoulders, its ends tied with a blue ribbon. He had dark blue eyes, so fine as to give an uncommon degree of refinement to his appearance, otherwise according with his rank in life; his figure was tall, slender, and agile; his hands and feet were small, as is often the case with natives of the sunny south; the latter were cased in thick knee-boots, the former—muscular, long-fingered, and brown—were ornamented with two or three massive gold rings. He wore breeches and a jacket of thin grey cloth; a thick blue cravat was knotted round his throat, gold earrings dangled from his ears. He understood English perfectly, but his answer to John Beard's query was hardly intelligible to his Sussex comprehension.

"Yes, I like your beer, master," he said, "and I like your English money. I am a pedlar, as you may see. Is there any market for my wares more likely than these villages yonder in the hollows of the hills?"

"There's Eastdean, Wellingly, Southbourne, Seaford, and then there's Lewes not so many miles away."

John Beard laid the true Sussex emphasis upon the latter syllable in each of the former names he pronounced.

"No great houses, standing by themselves, and away from any town? The quality pay best."

"There's Earn's Cliffe, a mile off; but they're in black for old Sir Anthony, and Papishers."

"The Papishers want gowns as well as other Christians, master; and I have goods both black and white, to say nothing of colours and patterns new and cheap, which Mistress Beard may see if I return here, and she chooses."

"My wife wants no flummery, muster!" said John Beard, in a surly voice.

The stranger smiled good-temperedly, showing very white teeth.

"No offence meant, master, so take

none. What's the way to this place?—how do you call it?"

"Earn's Cliffe; straight along the coast here to the left. You can't miss it, if you keep straight by the cliff."

The pedlar, taking out a chainwork purse, paid his score. Then, shouldering his pack and whistling lightly, he took his way along the edge of the cliff.

"Ben't you afraid to come back alone, muster?" asked the landlord, calling after him. "It's fier'd lonely o' nights along that cliff."

"No, my friend, I am not," said the pedlar, who had insinuated to John Beard's wife a possible intention of returning to the King's Head for the night; "these are moonlight evenings, and I carry arms." He drew aside his jacket; the muzzle of a pistol peeped out from the breeches pocket on either side.

The sun was sinking in the west; golden clouds on the horizon dipped into the sea; the waves were coming in on shore with a measured and regular wash; beyond, they lay stretched out in calm, purple, lakelike repose, save where a long, bright line cast by the last rays of the departing sun glimmered in rainbow and variable colouring. The pedlar, regardless of the beauty of the seaward scene, stepped lightly but firmly along, his paces marked by the quick confidence of one who knows his road. The rising cliff at first shut the Castle of Earn's Cliffe from his view, but soon the spire of the chapel, and the keep and warder's tower, rose black from behind the outline of the western quadrangle. A faint light streamed through the chapel windows. The pedlar, pausing a moment, slipped the pack from his shoulder to the ground, and crossed himself, removing reverently his hat.

"Holy Mary!" he ejaculated, "pray for us."

CHAPTER IV.

THE LADY OF THE CASTLE.

"This castle hath a pleasant seat: the air
Nimbly and sweetly recommends itself
Unto our gentler senses."

"Forby being a Papist, I'se uphaud her for
—on just for the bitterest Jacobite in the haill
shire."—*Rob Roy*.

THE founder of the family of Talbot of Earn's Cliffe led the left wing of the Norman line at Hastings, and received in guerdon for his services upon that field

a large tract of land in Sussex. At Earn's Cliffe, the most commanding situation upon the southern coast, he built a castle—one of the forty-nine enumerated in Domesday-book—afterwards razed to the ground in the barons' wars, by Simon de Montfort. The Talbots of that day, loyal then as ever, had espoused the king's side, and their devotion then and thereafter entailed upon them reverses un murmuringly supported. The family motto, "*Pour foy et pour roy*," was a well chosen one.

The present Castle of Earn's Cliffe, erected principally in the reigns of Edward II. and Henry VII., is built of grey stone, now colour-stained with the lapse of centuries and the storms of the bleak wild coast: the waters of a deep moat creep round three sides of its walls, adding an additional characteristic of isolation to the solitary pile.

Built at such different epochs, the castle is of mixed orders of architecture: it forms a double quadrangle, the eastern containing the chapel, the hall, the library, and the principal apartments; the western, the offices, stables, and inferior chambers. The principal gateway, opening into the eastern quadrangle, is flanked by two round towers, mantled thickly with clustering ivy, named respectively the keep and the warder's tower, the chief relics of the older portion of Earn's Cliffe.

Passing under this gateway, and crossing an angle of the interior courtyard of the quadrangle, a stone-porch, arched and enriched with elaborate mouldings, lit at the side by square-headed windows, opens into the entrance-hall, the oaken walls of which are hung with antlers, trophies of the chase in years long past, when the weald of Sussex stretched for forty miles, a wild and sylvan forest. Opposite the door of the entrance-hall, a wide oak staircase leads to the principal sleeping-rooms: to the left a heavy high-arched oaken door leads into the grand hall; to the right are the library and the apartments appropriated to the family use.

On the east side of the quadrangle, opposite the principal gateway, stands the chapel; on the western, is the great hall. In many points the style of both is identical—both occupying an entire side of the quadrangle; both are of the same order of architecture, of the same lofty height, and lit by the same mullioned windows, ornamented with foliated tracery: in both also the acute,

high-pitched, arched ceiling is formed by the rafters of the outer roof.

Cloisters extend along the interior of the eastern quadrangle on all sides: over the cloisters on two sides are galleries leading to the apartments of the second floor, to be reached, if necessary, by exterior and separate stairs, instead of by the grand ascent springing from the entrance-hall. In these gallery windows are painted the arms of the Talbots of Earn's Cliffe—an eagle holding in her beak a scroll, bearing the words "*Pour foy et pour roy*"—interspersed with many noble coats of families allied to theirs.

The chief glory of the castle is its dining-hall; it merits a particular description. It is wainscoted with oak black with age; an immense window of stained glass, mullioned, rich in flowing tracery, in form a pointed arch, lit by seven lights, admits the only rays that find their way into the sombre room. The door opening from the entrance-hall is at the right hand, far down the side; immense chimney-pieces, carved in stone, are situated opposite each other about half-way up the room; at the lower end of the hall is a gallery, called the "Minstrels' Gallery." On the walls is suspended the well-tried armour of many a fighting Talbot of olden times, from the curved-shank spurs* worn by Sir Guillaume de Talbot at Hastings, to the blue steel-gilt casque, buff-leather coat, blue steel-gilt back-plate, garde-rein, and breast-plate—ornamented with a guardian image of the Virgin on its front—borne by Sir Stephen Talbot at Naseby. But more prized than any of the suits are the relics of armour worn by crusading Talbots of pious memory, and the breast-plate, gauntlet, jamb, and solleret of Sir Raoul, knighted by Constantine Palæologus as the bravest of the Christian knights who defended Constantinople against Sultan Mahomet in 1452. The Talbots, a turbulent and warlike race, threw themselves perpetually into the thick of every national or civil broil; and when England

* It is a mistake to suppose that we possess specimens of very early armour. The 'most ancient chain mail and the earliest plate armour' are in the collection at Goodrich Court: the former of the time of Edward the Third, the latter of that of Henry the Sixth. 'European suits previous to the middle of the thirteenth century cannot be expected to exist, as before the rings of steel were connected so as to form chain mail, they must have fallen asunder in proportion to the decay of the cloth on which they were stitched.'—Preface to Meyrick's *Ancient Armour*.

was at peace, they sought renown in foreign wars.

The stern black-bearded faces of successive generations frown down upon the present representative of their race: her fair beauty, her devotion, her large-hearted charity, presenting a singular contrast to their dark lineaments, their lawless, godless lives, their selfish, grasping souls. The Talbots were feared still more than they were hated by the country folk around, for their religion caused them to be regarded with a sort of superstitious dread. Gwendolyn's charity to the country people might have earned their regard, but the word "Papist," the sight of her cross and rosary, of Father Adrian's robe and shaven crown, formed an insuperable barrier between her and the dogged peasants, themselves more bigoted in their unreasoning dislike than even Gwendolyn or Father Adrian, staunch Catholics as they were.

Six months have passed since Sir Anthony Talbot departed to his fathers, and over his tomb under the altar-steps of the chapel Masses have been said and sung day and night.

On the dais, at the upper end of the hall, sits a group, upon whom the sun streams in through the painted glass with unwonted lustre. Gwendolyn—habited in the deepest black, its fashion showing the dazzling whiteness of her neck and arms, an ebony rosary and crucifix suspended at her girdle—sits working at a large frame of embroidery with her waiting-gentlewoman, Mistress Winifred Osborn; while her duenna, or lady chaperone, Mrs. Western, knits in silence, respecting her mistress's mood. The needle has fallen from Gwendolyn's hand; Winifred Osborn, suspending for a minute the progress of the busy thread which flies in and out of her canvas, wonders in her light little heart at the gravity of so young a face. Presently Gwendolyn rises, and begins to pace with stately steps the lower end of the dais, Winifred's eyes following her gliding figure, and thinking a lady so fair, so rich, and so beloved, should have no cause for care.

Gwendolyn Talbot is very pale; her figure is erect and well-rounded; the little head rising from sloping shoulders, and a stately neck is carried with proud dignity; her hands, arms, and feet are marvels of form and grace. Her complexion is dazzlingly fair, of a pure, delicate, blue-veined whiteness. Her hair—blonde, and waved with a natural ripple

unpowdered, but turned back over a high roll according to the mode of that day—is confined at the back of her head, and thence falls in a single massive curl on each side of her neck, streaming down over the black dress. These abundant tresses, of a peculiar shade, neither flaxen, brown, nor golden, but of a flossy silky fairness, harmonize wonderfully with the delicate complexion, unrelieved, except by the pink which tints her lips, and by dark eyebrows and eyelashes, which shade heavy-lidded eyes of a blue surprisingly clear and limpid, and very large.

"So far I have drawn merely a fair-haired blonde; a woman perhaps soft and simple, perhaps arch and coquette, like some of the hooped and powdered ladies who smile upon us from the canvas of Sir Joshua.

Gwendolyn Talbot—brought up in the strictest seclusion, educated in the Catholic faith and in the learning of St. Omer by Father Adrian—is of sterner stuff, cast in a more heroic mould. Those limpid blue eyes can flash with a cold and steely light; the white forehead can contract with pride and anger; from the full arched lips can drop words calmly and coldly spoken, but powerful to wound with a bitter emphasis of irony. Rarely, however, are either tongue or features permitted such licence. Gwendolyn, bred by a Jesuit priest and an old soldier, has the virtues of man, if she shows as yet but little of the softness of woman. She is brave as a lion, true as steel, silent as the grave. Proud and haughty, perhaps revengeful, she is a kind mistress—though her servants fear to ask too often favours which are always granted when asked—a warm friend; above all, a bitter enemy.

Mrs. Western, though for years the nominal governess to this princess, has never possessed the slightest shadow of influence or authority over her, although Gwendolyn has always treated her with kindness and respect. Miss Talbot has never yet made a friend of any woman; she has never imparted a girlish confidence, or showed a single feminine weakness, to her constant companion, pretty Mistress Winifred Osborn.

The simple language of the day calls Winifred Miss Talbot's waiting gentlewoman, although she performs no menial office, and herself shares, when she requires them, the services of her lady's own maid; performing, in recompence for an annual stipend, any letter-writing, fine

needlework, or ladylike occupation of the kind, that Gwendolyn may allot to her.

Seventeen years ago, Mr. Osborn, the Vicar of Whitehaven, died of an infectious disorder, which had a month before carried off his young wife, who, after two years of matrimony, had just given birth to her first child. The vicar had been before marriage a gay, hunting, sporting parson, of a class common enough at that day—living up to his income, and in all likelihood outrunning it. In two years of wedded life he had not saved enough to defray the expenses of his own and his wife's funeral; the infant was left penniless and entirely friendless. The kind-hearted suggestion of Mrs. Western, already Gwendolyn Talbot's *gouvernante*, procured the little orphan a home at Earn's Cliffe as companion to her charge. Winifred is grateful for the shelter of a home; and the duenna and waiting gentlewoman are friends, in spite of a difference of years and of religion; for Winifred is and always will be a sturdy little Protestant, deaf to the persuasive voices of the charmers who invite her to seek refuge in the fold of Rome.

Winifred Osborn is three years younger than her mistress, who is nearly twenty-one; she is small, dark, piquante, and coquette, with a trim little figure, bright brown eyes, cherry cheeks and lips, and dark hair, raised high over a roll, and gathered in a knot behind under a smart little head-dress of white lace, in the language of the period called a "Brussels' mob." She is still in mourning for Sir Anthony, but her black *sacque* is adorned with knots of violet ribbon in every part where place can be found for the coquettish adornment which Mistress Osborn loves.

Like every member of his household, except Father Adrian and Gwendolyn, little Winifred disliked and feared old Sir Anthony Talbot, and it irks her sorely to be obliged to doff the pretty coloured dresses which become her so much better than that abominable black. While her mistress paces the dais, pondering the future destiny of England, and the fate of the exiled house of Stuart, Mistress Winifred is wondering when her lady will permit the household to discard their mourning; for then she will be able to wear her cherry-coloured hood and knots with her grey silk bodice and skirt on Sundays at Whitehaven Church, and so drive to distraction the vicar, her sworn servant and slave. "I shall make a good parson's wife," the little lady soliloquizes,

"for Mrs. Western has taught me to keep house, brew, and bake, distil strong waters, make pastries and confections, spin, knit, do plain and fancy works, and even to understand something of simples and the attendance of the sick." Winifred can read, too, fluently, and write well, with better spelling in her letters than many a Court lady's can boast; and her ear has been so accustomed to hear French spoken by the visitors to Earn's Cliffe, that she can patter it quickly when occasion arises for its use.

Mrs. Western—placid, grey-haired, soft-featured, dressed with scrupulous nicety and care—sits in her easy chair, knitting assiduously, and thinking she has been fortunate in her pupil Winifred; fancying, too, that a little more of her lore and less of Father Adrian's would have made a better housewife, and perhaps a happier and busier woman, of Gwendolyn, who spends much of her time in reverie, and detests the necessary supervision of household affairs which falls occasionally to her lot as Mistress of Earn's Cliffe. Since Sir Anthony's death, the household at the castle has led a life conventual in its seclusion, and in its regular routine of religious exercise; irksome doubtless to many of its members, but suiting well the temper of its mistress, still mourning the loss of her grandfather.

Early rising, then almost universal, (does not Lovelace call his cousins idle hussies for never descending until eight o'clock?) was the constant practice of the entire family at Earn's Cliffe. Miss Talbot, carefully and elaborately attired for the day, her private devotions scrupulously performed, attended mass in the chapel daily, at half-past seven. At half-past eight a breakfast, simple to frugality, was served in the hall—according to the ancient custom of the house—to Miss Talbot, Mrs. Western, and Winifred.

After breakfast, while her duenna and companion performed the numerous and complex household avocations common to the ladies of that day, Gwendolyn pursued in the library, an apartment long dedicated to her use, occupations more congenial to her taste, formed by the elaborate education imparted to her by Father Adrian. Here she superintended, too, numerous details necessary to the management of so large a property as

that of Earn's Cliffe, still entrusted to the chaplain's administration. Here, too, she directed, also under the priest's influence, the expenditure of the large sums which her own inclination and her Church's tenets alike devoted to almsgiving. From the castle no suppliant, whatever his creed, circumstances, or necessity, was ever suffered to go away unrelieved.

These various duties fulfilled, and a certain time devoted to exercise—at two o'clock dinner was served in the hall, and at that meal Father Adrian joined the female portion of the family. At three evensong was celebrated in the chapel; then, as at morning prayer, Gwendolyn was invariably present; and then, as upon every occasion of extra service, whether mass or litanies, she required the attendance of every disengaged member of the household—Winifred Osborn, the sole Protestant, alone excepted.

Miss Talbot's evenings were always spent in the library, in the society of Mrs. Western and Winifred, often joined by Father Adrian.

So devout and obedient a daughter—a woman of talent, property, family, and personal characteristics so uncommon as Gwendolyn's—could not fail to be a cherished child of a Church which understands so thoroughly and employs so intelligently every species of genius, mind, and temperament. The director chosen to superintend her gradual progress to years of maturity was well adapted for his office, and had obtained a complete ascendancy over her intellect and character, masculine as were both in many points. But the fatherly and solitary affection which the priest—grey-haired, severed completely from every other human tie—felt for his pupil and child in the faith were a sufficient guarantee of his devotion to Miss Talbot's prosperity and happiness, both only subservient in his estimation to the interests of his order and his Church.

After the interests of the faith, priest and lady alike ranked that of the Stuart cause—the great object of the English Catholics—for which the Talbots had already at more than one crisis perilled life and property.

CHAPTER V.

"AN AGENT FROM THE PRETENDER."

"And what are these news you had from the travelling merchant?"

"The pedlar, your honour means: ca' him what ye wull, they're a great convenience in a country side that's scant o' borough towns like this" Sussex.—*Rob Roy*.

MISS TALBOT this evening has been present at the performance of a special litany. It was just concluded. Father Adrian, an enthusiast for the sacred music of his Church, is discoursing marvellous strains upon the splendid organ, Gwendolyn's gift, which stands in the gallery over the door leading from the antechapel into the chapel itself. As the divine harmonies of Palestrina float through the building, dying away among the oaken rafters of the acute-arched, high-pitched roof, Gwendolyn stands motionless and with bent head before the altar-rails, her reverie following the chain of thought to which the sacred service and melody has led; the light of the setting sun throwing a faint radiance through the painted glass, tingeing her blonde tresses with a golden radiance.

Winifred tripping lightly over the pavement had to repeat her mistress's name twice before she heard.

"My lady—Miss Talbot—my lady—there is a foreign pedlar, a Frenchman, I think, wants to speak with you."

"Can you not see him and relieve him, or purchase of him, if either be what he wishes?"

"He will show his goods only to you, my lady," said Winifred, as Gwendolyn followed her through the antechapel and across the quadrangle into the hall. "He seems a strange sort of person," continued little Winifred; "he would not show any of his goods to the maids, or even to myself or Mrs. Western; he said he would give the lady the first choice."

The pedlar, our foreigner of the King's Head, stood at the upper end of the hall; his pack upon a table, his hat off. He bowed very low to Gwendolyn, more slightly to Winifred, as they advanced, and began to address Miss Talbot in French, beseeching her to look at his poor stock. Gwendolyn, carelessly falling into a chair at hand, bowed her head in token of assent. The pedlar began to undo his pack, but so awkwardly that Winifred rated him for his stupidity. He smiled, coloured, and taking Mrs. Wes-

tern's scissors, cut the string. Mrs. Western and Winifred drew nearer as he began to display his stock.

"Oh, my lady, what pretty earrings! What a fan, and what a beautiful black lace mantilla. It would suit divinely with your blue brocade and black velvet hood."

Gwendolyn's brow darkened.

"Ah! Winifred," she said, but kindly, "still the same little frivolous thing, always thinking of adorning the poor outside."

"Nay, my lady, I was thinking then of yours, which certainly needs ornament as little as most. It is all very well for you to talk who don't require such a change of attire as many," continued Winifred, half pertly. "We who are not beauties must even try to pass for such by help of dress, jewels, patches, curling-irons, ribbons, powder, and such like."

She had taken up the lace mantilla, and was endeavouring to adjust its folds upon her little person.

"Permettez-moi, mademoiselle," said the pedlar.

A quick touch of his hand draped it in true Spanish fashion over Winifred's dark hair and trim figure. Mrs. Western watched her little airs and graces in the coquettish array with indulgent eyes. The foreigner bent his head rapidly to a level with Gwendolyn's, as she carelessly fingered some jewellery among his store.

"Gwenda, don't you know me? I come on State business. Find some pretext for seeing me alone."

She started slightly, but her nerves were of cast iron: she gave no audible sign of surprise. Winifred turned to her before she had time to speak.

"Yes, I will take that mantilla. Winny, you may keep it; it becomes you well. I intend not to cast my deep mourning yet; and when I do I have change of attire sufficient to satisfy even you for years to come. Never mind thanks, Winifred; but tell me, is not this Indian jewellery much the shape and substance of mine I broke some time ago?"

"Yes, my lady. Shall I fetch yours? Will you match the set?"

"No; do not trouble yourself. They are in Father Adrian's care; he takes charge of them to send into France by the earliest hand, to be mended by a Paris jeweller used to such work."

The seeming pedlar instantly took the hint.

"I sail for France to-morrow morning,

madam," he said; "and I know workmen clever in all sorts of such work. I reach Calais to-morrow, Paris in three days' time."

"Follow me then to the Father's rooms," said Gwendolyn; "he may have parcels or letters to send to friends at St. Omer. Winifred, you and Mrs. Western may amuse yourselves in looking over the store of trinkets here. This Flanders lace I will buy. Mrs. Western, please calculate its price. What is it a piece, my friend?"

"Seven shillings, madam."

"Seven shillings the yard," said Gwendolyn to Mrs. Western, with a quick frown aside to him. "Measure it, and make out its price and that of the lace mantilla. Follow me, pedlar, and bring those point ruffles and those lace cravats; the Father may wish to purchase any new French fancy of the kind."

He followed her through the cloister and up a square oak staircase into Father Adrian's rooms, those next the chapel, on the southern side of the eastern quadrangle of Earn's Cliffe. The priest sat reading in his study, a small panelled and comfortably wainscoted room, furnished sparsely but well. On three sides of the chamber extended bookshelves, whose contents, old, rich, and rare, were the only things of price in the room.

Father Adrian Martelli, an Italian of humble origin, had by remarkable talents, and character, attracted in early youth, while in a menial service, the notice of his master's confessor, an ecclesiastic of some repute, and of the Jesuit order. From that time his course in life was marked out: a peculiarly finished education had prepared him for the responsible post he had filled for years as the spiritual and temporal confidant, adviser, and friend of the Catholic Talbots of Earn's Cliffe, a family dear, from their religion and politics, to the interests of influential persons at Rome, and from whom the Stuart family and the Jesuit order expected great things. In personal advantages the priest was well calculated for the society and position in which he found himself: he was gentlemanly and attractive in manner; handsome and prepossessing in form and features; bland, clever, supple, and insinuating of character; of much learning, and great knowledge and experience of mankind. He rose as Gwendolyn entered the room; she advanced to him, shutting carefully the door.

"Father, here is Geoffrey Arthington, come from France in disguise, bringing, I hope, great news."

The priest welcomed him warmly. Geoffrey, turning to Gwendolyn, presented, as he said, his credentials; a letter, which she received with reverence, and the signature to which she fervently kissed with a devotion which partook of the warmth of her nature, in which mingled almost equally religion and romance. The letter bore the date of a week before, but had no superscription or heading of address, and ran as follows:

"I am glad of this occasion to let you know how well pleased I am to hear of the care you take to follow the example of your family in their loyalty to mine; and I doubt not of your endeavours to maintain the same spirit as far as in you lies. Geoffrey is now with me, and I am always glad to have some of my brave Englishmen about me, whom I value as they deserve. Doubt not of my particular regard for you, which I am persuaded you will always deserve.

(Signed) CHARLES P.

"The prince may rest assured I will merit it to the last drop of my blood, if need were," said Gwendolyn, her fair face flushing, her eyes kindling with a light and lustre which added tenfold beauty to her noble face.

"He is aware of it," said Geoffrey; "he knows both your devotion and Father Adrian's. I am permitted to tell you that France will aid us, and the blow is to be struck at once. The rout at Fontenoy has disabled the Elector's army; Walpole* is dead; the Cabinet is divided—therefore weak and wavering: all Scotland and the north of England are on our side. We pause, uncertain of the south."

"I will do all I can," cried Gwendolyn.

Geoffrey Arthington shook his head. "Without co-operation all must fail," he said. "Many of the most powerful of the English nobles—Norfolk and his duchess at their head—wish success to our cause; but they all fear to commit themselves by promising any tangible aid, while they are uncertain of the result. Were we victorious, their help not wanted," said Geoffrey, bitterly, "then who would be so loyal, who make such sacrifices for the cause as they?"

* Lord Orford, whose title the Jacobites ignored, as they did all save those conferred by the Stuart line.

"Cowards that they are!" cried Gwendolyn. "Oh! that we were independent of such half-hearted allies!"

"Would that we were!" said Geoffrey. "But they are as useless to the Elector as they are to us, and will fail to declare themselves until they see the result."

Geoffrey reckoned wrongly; but he never contemplated so wild an attempt to regain the crown of England as the rash Charles Edward afterwards made.

"For the last twelve months," he continued, "I have been half over England at various times and in different disguises; I have taken letters to and from the king and prince to half the English Court. George little knows what faithful service his hirelings yield him. Gwenda, I have had my moments of doubt, sometimes of despair; the treachery and chicanery I encounter sometimes sicken and discourage me. At moments I have even wondered if a cause favoured by God would be dependent upon the support of such dastardly knaves as the courtiers whose help we crave."

"It is a temptation of the Evil One. Have faith, Geoffrey," said Gwendolyn; "the Almighty works by strange instruments sometimes."

She raised her eyes to his as she spoke; her face, earnest and uplifted, shone with the light of the belief of which she spoke. In her heart throbbed a faith, a loyalty, for either of which she would gladly have gone to martyrdom any day, if by so doing she could have one jot advanced the cause of her religion, or of the dis-crowned prince whom she believed her rightful king. Geoffrey gazed at her, thinking of the face of Mary in a "Transfiguration of the Virgin" he had seen as an altar-piece in a cathedral abroad. But he turned directly to Father Adrian, suppressing a deep sigh.

"These double-faced gentry, Father, receive our letters, and are even profuse in their professions by word of mouth to any messenger the king accredits to them; but they almost unanimously refuse to sign their names to such a declaration as the prince ought to receive before he ventures his person among them: such an invitation ought to be given by some of the principal English nobility as he received from Scotland five years ago. But they shuffle it off by requiring proof of the promises of French aid; they pretend to think France will fail us as she has often done before."

Father Adrian paused, deep in thought;

the Jesuit, he it observed—dear though the Stuart cause was to his Order and the interest of his faith—gave utterance to no audible flights of enthusiasm like those prompted by Gwendolyn's inexperienced and impetuous youth. His character always reminded me of that given by a talented historian to Anthony Perrenot, Cardinal Granvelle, of diplomatic memory; "profoundly and variously learned, quick and dexterous, ready-witted, smooth and fluent of tongue, fertile in expedient, courageous, resolute."

"It appears to me," he said, after a few moments of abstraction, "that if a meeting could be arranged between some confidential emissary of the French Court, personally favourable to—if possible interested in—the Stuart cause, and these uncertain gentry, such an envoy could lay before them such a statement of the prince's resources, and of the proposed aid to be given by France, that it might go far to decide even the most cowardly to take some decisive step."

"But where, Father, could such a meeting be held? Not on French ground, for the English lords would decline so far to compromise themselves with their Government, and the fact of such an interview having taken place would assuredly ooze out. Besides, we could hardly expect a foreigner of distinction—and no other would serve our purpose—to hazard his person by venturing as a Stuart emissary on English ground."

"Here, in this house, such a meeting could be held," said Gwendolyn. "The sea, so close at hand, affords means both of arrival and departure without the need of advancing more than a mile or two inland; of escape, too, were a hasty flight found necessary at any time. And if the worst were to happen, and every avenue of escape blocked up, I could ensure the safety, not of one, but of twenty men, were they but within these walls, though the entire army of the Elector were in the house. Here such an emissary might lie hid for weeks—his place of retreat unknown to every one but myself—and depart secretly the moment events permitted his flight."

"Then Sir Anthony has acquainted you with the secret of the hidden chambers and passages of this house?"

"He did, but under the usual oath of secrecy, except—as customary, when I should feel my end approaching—to the next heir."

Father Adrian paused again.

"We need now but some expedient," said Geoffrey, "to account plausibly for such a meeting as we intend taking place at Earn's Cliffe. It is almost impossible to keep an affair of such extent, and including so many persons, profoundly secret."

"The very thought that occurred to me," said Father Adrian; "and I have hit on an expedient. This month Gwendolyn is twenty-one. Let her celebrate her coming of age by a grand fête. The Talbots are connected by blood or marriage with every great Catholic house; let all such connexions be invited; and include in the list of guests also all the gentry round, whether Catholic or Protestant, to avert suspicion. Send special intimations to any Jacobites whose presence may be particularly required; and once here, a dozen persons might meet night after night, either in the chapel or the hall, in perfect security, while the mass of the guests, wearied out with gaiety, are sleeping the sleep of the just."

"Well thought, Father Adrian," said Gwendolyn.

"To-morrow morning at five, I sail," said Geoffrey, after an instant's deliberation. "The plan seems to me safe and feasible. I will lay it at once before the prince. If it be adopted, I will send letters arranging the time and manner of the envoy's coming by a private hand. The prince is now at Brest. Six hours of a favourable wind will waft him safely to English ground."

The chapel clock struck nine: Geoffrey started at the sound.

"You have been here almost too long, my son," said Father Adrian. "A longer stay may provoke remark among the household; though I think," continued the priest, as he scanned Geoffrey's metamorphosed face and figure, "that so complete a disguise could by no possibility be recognised."

"Nevertheless, Geoffrey," said Gwendolyn, "learn more accurately the price of Flanders lace before you carry it for sale again. But stay—I jest when grave interests are at stake, and every moment is of value. You are, doubtless, in want of food? A few moments may be spared for refreshment before you go."

Glad to linger longer with Gwendolyn, Geoffrey accepted the proffered hospitality, though needing nothing.

"I will go to seek food and wine," said Father Adrian, "to give a colour to

your detention in my apartment. We must not neglect small precautions in treating of great affairs."

The priest left the room. Geoffrey, starting from his seat, seized Gwendolyn's hand.

"Gwenda, do you forget the last time we were alone together, and the subject of our conversation then——"

She coloured faintly, for she remembered well. The day preceding the night of Sir Anthony's death she had passed at Deane Hall, the dower residence of the Talbots, ten miles off, given to Geoffrey Arthington's mother on her marriage, and where, since her widowhood, she had constantly lived. The messenger who summoned the cousins to their grandfather's dying bed had interrupted Geoffrey's passionate declaration of love for his cousin, heard on her part in silence, if not with consent.

"I have not forgotten, Geoffrey—I never forget; but it seems as if years had passed over our heads since that night—years which have changed me from a simple girl into a woman wise in knowledge of the world, engrossed in schemes and projects in which thoughts of love and marriage have no place——"

He interrupted her, pouring out a vehement flood of remonstrance and argument, ending with a declaration of passionate affection. But she, in her turn, cut him short—

"Geoffrey," she said, "spare me at present the pain of hearing so much, and of feeling able to return so little. I know not how it is, but my heart is cold; it throbs no response even to such love as yours. There is no one, however, for whom I feel or can feel more warmly than I do for you. Perhaps if I had lived in happier times——"

He seized her hands, cutting her words short—

"Promise, Gwenda, to be mine when this weary waiting is over, and the king enjoys his own."

She was standing in the deep window: he had flung himself on his knees before her, his hands clasped one of hers. She smiled mournfully as she looked down upon his eager, upturned face, bright with the flush of youthful love and hope. The disguising hair had slipped off as he had thrown himself bodily at her feet; and she passed her disengaged hand with a sad, thoughtful, half-caressing gesture, over his bright, closely-clipped, but waving locks. There is much of character and

poetry in a hand, and Gwendolyn's was a beautiful and strongly characteristic one; long, slight, and elegantly moulded, delicate blue veins marbling its fair whiteness. It was a hand that could clasp tightly and hold firmly. For a moment the fingers of the one Geoffrey held twined round his; but their grasp relaxed, and it lay passive. A very mournful sadness stole over her face as she pondered his last entreaty during a moment's pause, in which he gazed at her as if his life hung upon the answer.

"Perhaps, Geoffrey, that day may never come. If it ever should arrive, then we will talk of this matter: now——"

Father Adrian's entrance cut her short. The priest placed bottles and glasses upon the table, and taking from a cupboard cold meat, bread, and the implements necessary to their due service, left the room; but this time retired into an inner chamber, shutting the door of communication between it and the one in which the cousins were. He knew the terms on which they stood, and judged it right, doubtless, to give them these few moments for a private interview.

Gwendolyn, taking wine, poured some into a glass.

"Drink, Geoffrey," she said; "you are, I am certain, tired and faint."

"Ah, Gwenda, more than a mere bodily weakness frequently oppresses me, though the last few months have been a succession of fatiguing and disheartening journeys made in every variety of troublesome disguise. Remember, Gwenda, I am young—youth does not well endure a constant and unrequited toil; and my heart, weighed down by a weight of heavy cares and petty annoyances, yet more wearying, throbs, too, with a consuming passion your less impetuous nature can ill conceive. The love and loyalty you pour out solely upon your faith and your king share in my heart their empire with your image——"

She interrupted him.

"Geoffrey, remember that you, too, are of the blood of the true Talbots, and the head of the loyal Arthingtons!"

Rising, he took her hand, and drawing her to a window, bade her look around. A fair prospect was visible from that side of the quadrangle. The little village of Whitehaven lay nestled in the shadow of an amphitheatre of guardian hills; the spire of its church rose heavenwards from among gabled cottages and clustering

trees. Over all a rising moon shed her silvery light.

Peace and tranquillity reigned around—not a sound, save the distant ripple of the Channel waves, broke the quiet stillness of the night.

"Gwenda!" cried Geoffrey, suddenly, "are we right? Are we forcing French tyranny and civil war upon a free and peaceful nation? or are we indeed bringing to his own a king loved and remembered night and day in the hearts and the prayers of faithful people?"

"And these words from a Talbot!" cried Gwendolyn again, this time indignantly, her lips curling, her eyes flashing upon him a look of surprised disdain.

"Gwenda, these are but momentary and infrequent doubts," said Geoffrey, turning inwards, "but they merit no disdain; nor do I mean to desert the cause. Nay, for it I would die. If my blood only, shed a thousand times, could bring back a monarch to his loving subjects—a father absent and adored to his expectant children—how gladly would it not be poured out drop by drop. But if you knew, as I do, what war is, or how horrible it is for a king to wade to a throne through the blood of his people, your heart would sometimes fail and tremble, like mine does, even at the thought of success. And if we fail——"

"But God avert such a consummation!" cried Gwendolyn.

The woman, confident in the leader and the cause, contemplated only success: the man, old in experience discouraging and dearly bought, feared the worst; knowing as he did intimately, the character of the prince upon whom all their hopes depended.

Geoffrey Arthington, thoroughly aware of the almost despairing inertia of James Stuart; for years the frequent companion of his rash and headstrong son, now fretting supinely at every petty inconvenience which attended his enforced detention upon the French coast; knowing also the obstinate Protestantism of the English country gentry, the Whiggism of all the large towns, the equally determined Toryism and bigoted Catholicism of the Stuart family, was often despairing of success. Yet he worked onward bravely and unceasingly, letting neither the difficulties of his own duties and position, nor the impatience of the unmanageable and almost friendless prince, discourage one whit his efforts for the cause. Now, throwing off the momentary cloud of

doubt which had temporarily weighed down his spirits, he said amen heartily to the prayer of Gwendolyn. Then, casting aside the discussion of these vexed questions of politics, he pleaded with his cousin for one token to gladden the weary waiting time which must elapse in any case before he could hope to try to gain her hand.

She drew a ring from her finger, the only one she wore, an opal set in gold, the words "Faith merits favour" graven round its rim.

Father Adrian, opening his door, again startled the cousins.

"Geoffrey, time presses; suspicion will be rife if you delay. Follow me. I will see you safely through the porch; once outside, you must be safe in that disguise. It gives you the air of a man five years at least your senior. The complexion, too, and hands, how superbly they are tinted!"

Geoffrey laughed with the volatile light-heartedness of youth, as he replaced before a small oval mirror the wig which disguised his light chestnut hair.

"Oh!" said Gwendolyn, "what a pity, Geoffrey, to be obliged to crop all those curls!"

"It went sorely against the grain, Gwenda; still more even than to be dyed chocolate and to put rings in my ears. It will take months to replace my flowing locks."

She smiled. In happier days, his heart free from the burden of the unhappy but fascinating cause for which he laboured, Geoffrey might have been a beau of the first order—learned in lace and periwigs. A slight infusion of sarcasm lurked in the tone in which she answered his half-jesting regrets.

"The disguise becomes you, Geoffrey. But time presses. Father, guide him safely to the porch; see that he forgets not his pack, and the precaution of taking from Mrs. Western the right money in payment for what I purchased. Winifred has sharp eyes; beware of them."

"Gwenda," said Geoffrey, turning suddenly to her, "have you heard aught of Stephen Talbot?"

"Nothing; he has not been seen at Earn's Cliffe since the day I became its mistress."

"Gwenda, I always distrusted that man; and lately I have had reason to believe that my suspicions were well founded. I have been credibly informed that he frequents Whig places of resort—that he attends the Protestant service at Kensington, and that he meditates accepting an office under the Elector's Government. I fear he may be over deep in many of our secrets to be other than a dangerous enemy. If he should visit Earn's Cliffe, Gwenda, beware of him."

"He can know nothing of our plans or circumstances, Geoffrey. In my grandfather's time he never mingled with either the family or its guests. Since then he has not even visited this part of the country."

"You know not, Gwenda: he has intimate dealings with that smuggling scoundrel, John Beard, of Whitehaven Bay. I came over from Brest in his vessel, being forced to accept the first mode of passage, and liked the fellow less than ever."

"A dangerous risk, Geoffrey," said Father Adrian.

"I have run worse, Father, and the occasion was peremptory. I am certain he could not penetrate my disguise. Remember, Gwenda, to beware of Stephen Talbot. There are some instincts which never deceive us, and such an instinct has always warned me to beware of him. Farewell."

He kissed the hand she extended, and turning, followed Father Adrian from the room. Gwendolyn started from her seat.

"Geoffrey, you are not thinking of returning to Whitehaven? Remember the risk of recognition."

"I had already thought of it, Gwenda, and go on to Newhaven to-night."

(To be continued.)

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